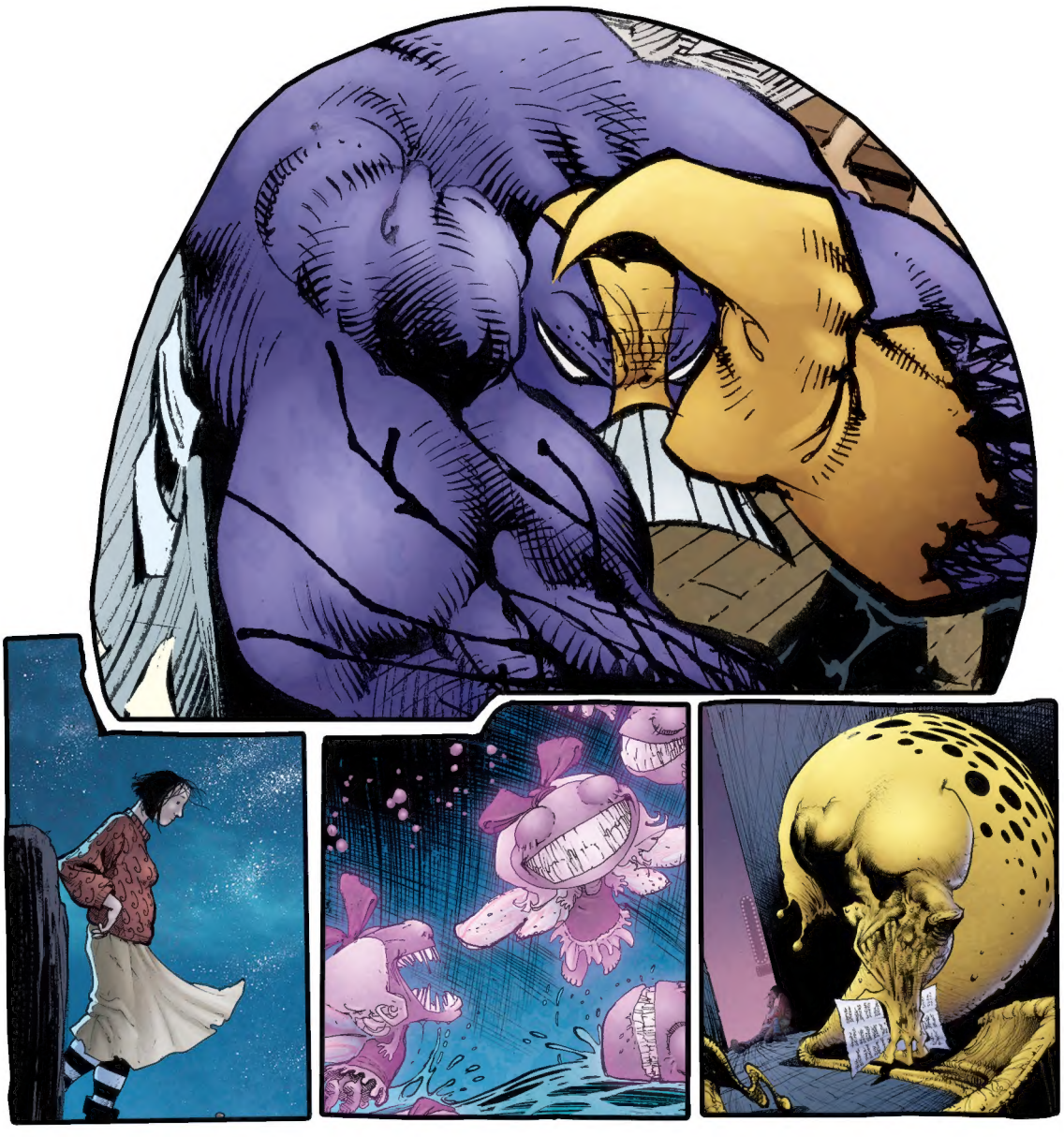
THE MAXX

maxximized

Sam Kieth • William Messner-Loebs



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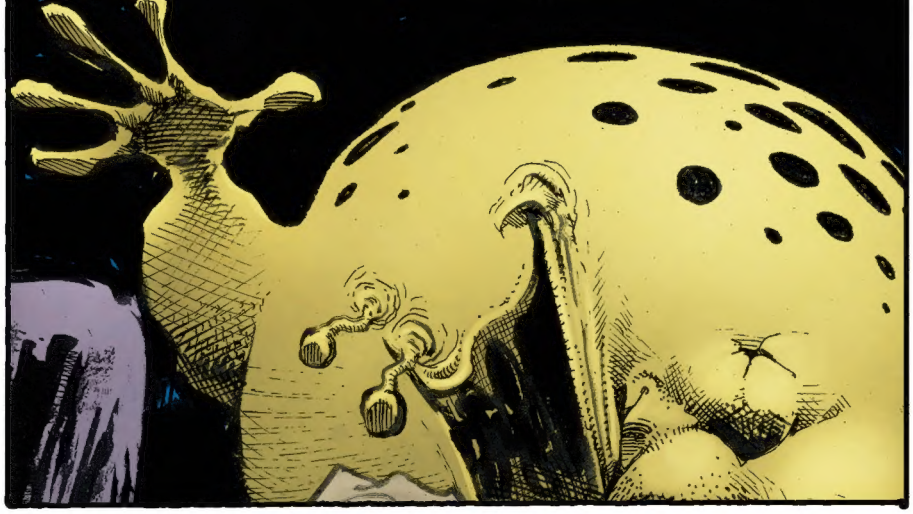

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eISBN: 9781623028916

Digital

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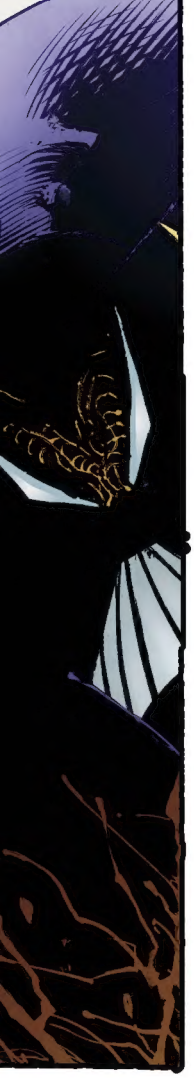
Originally published as THE MAXX: MAXXIMIZED issues #19–24.



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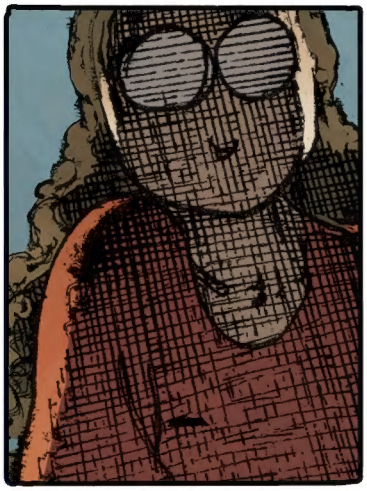

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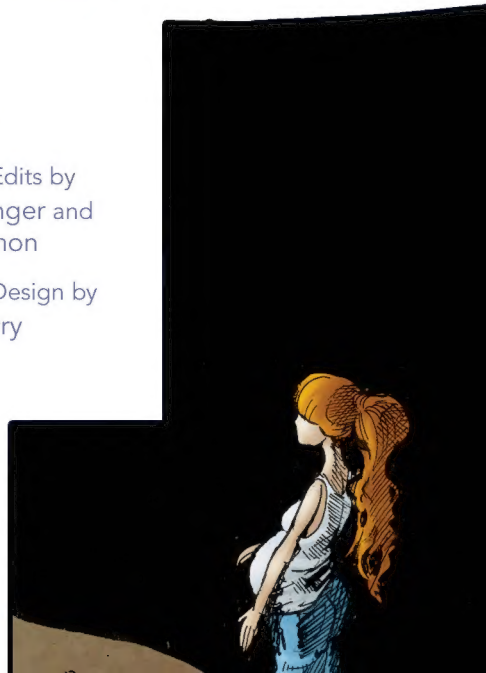
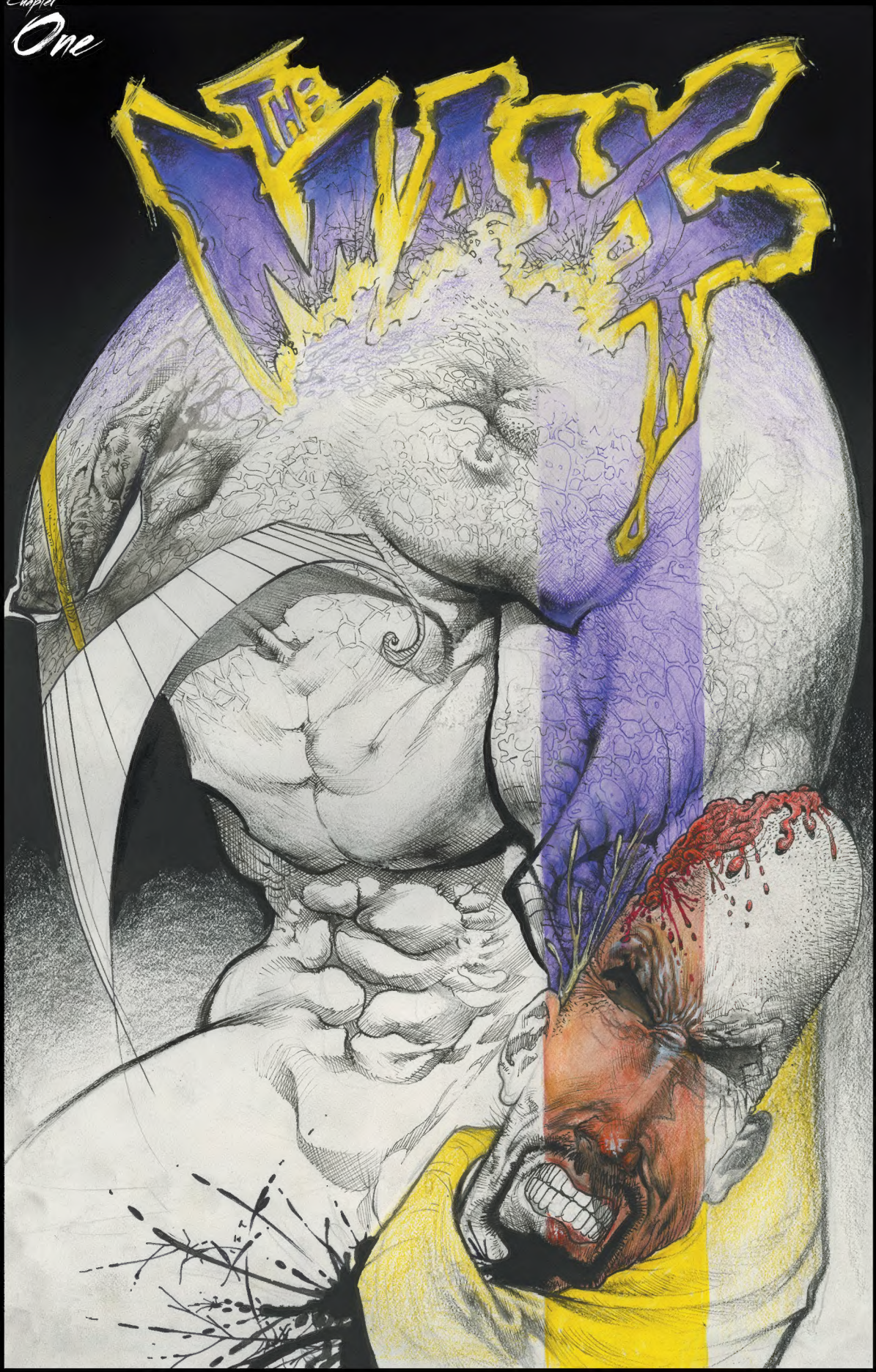
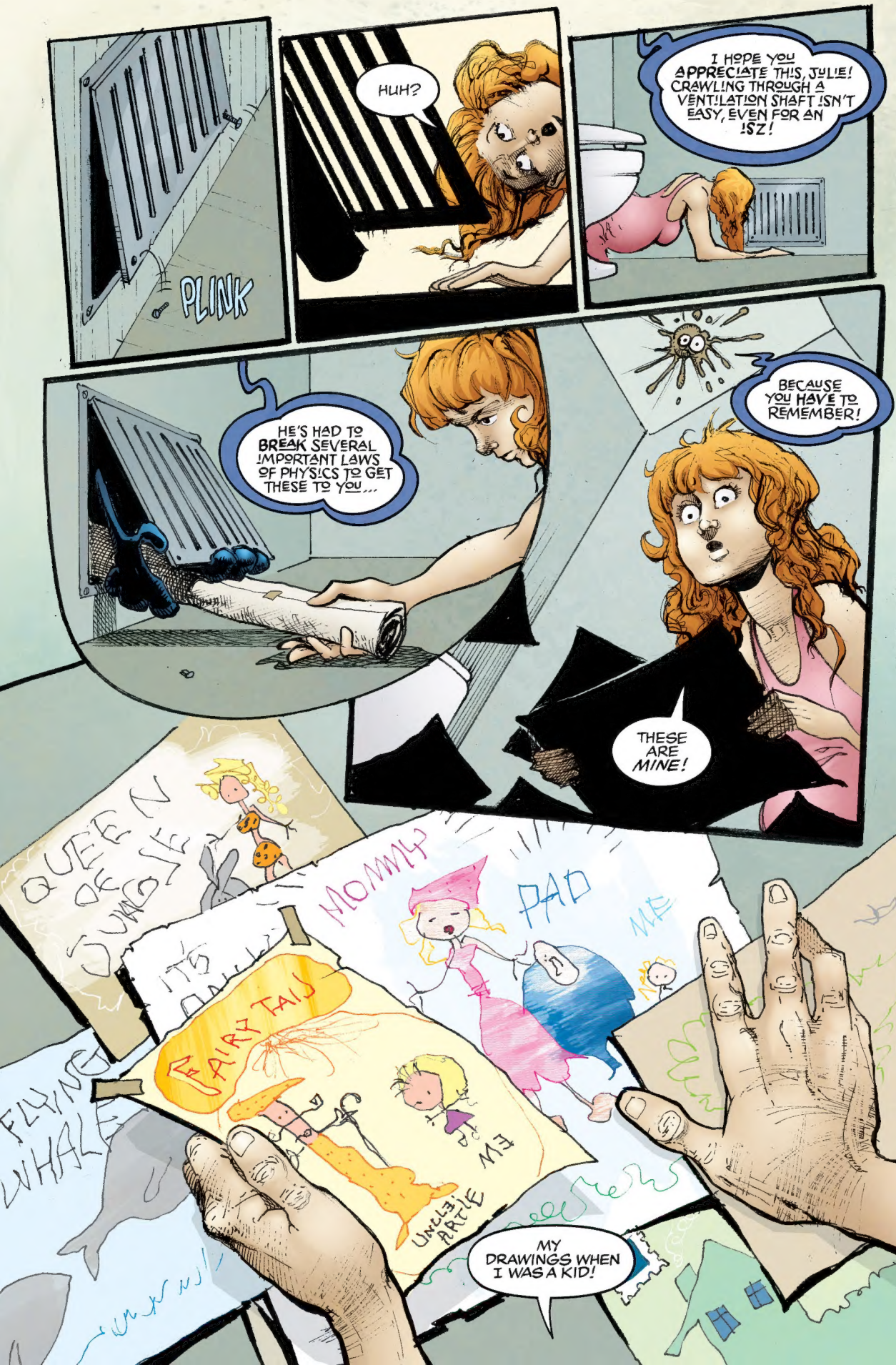


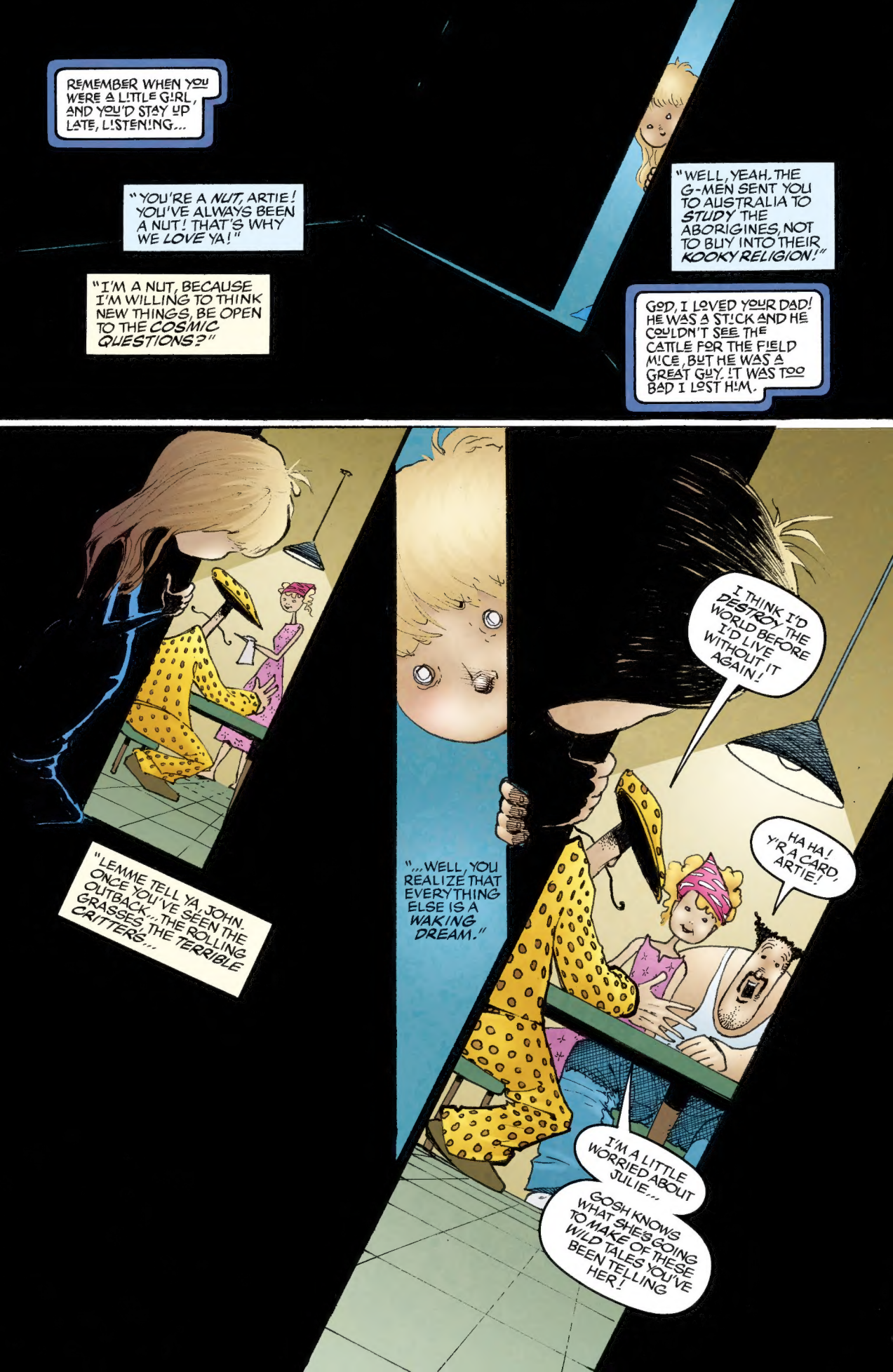
Chapter One



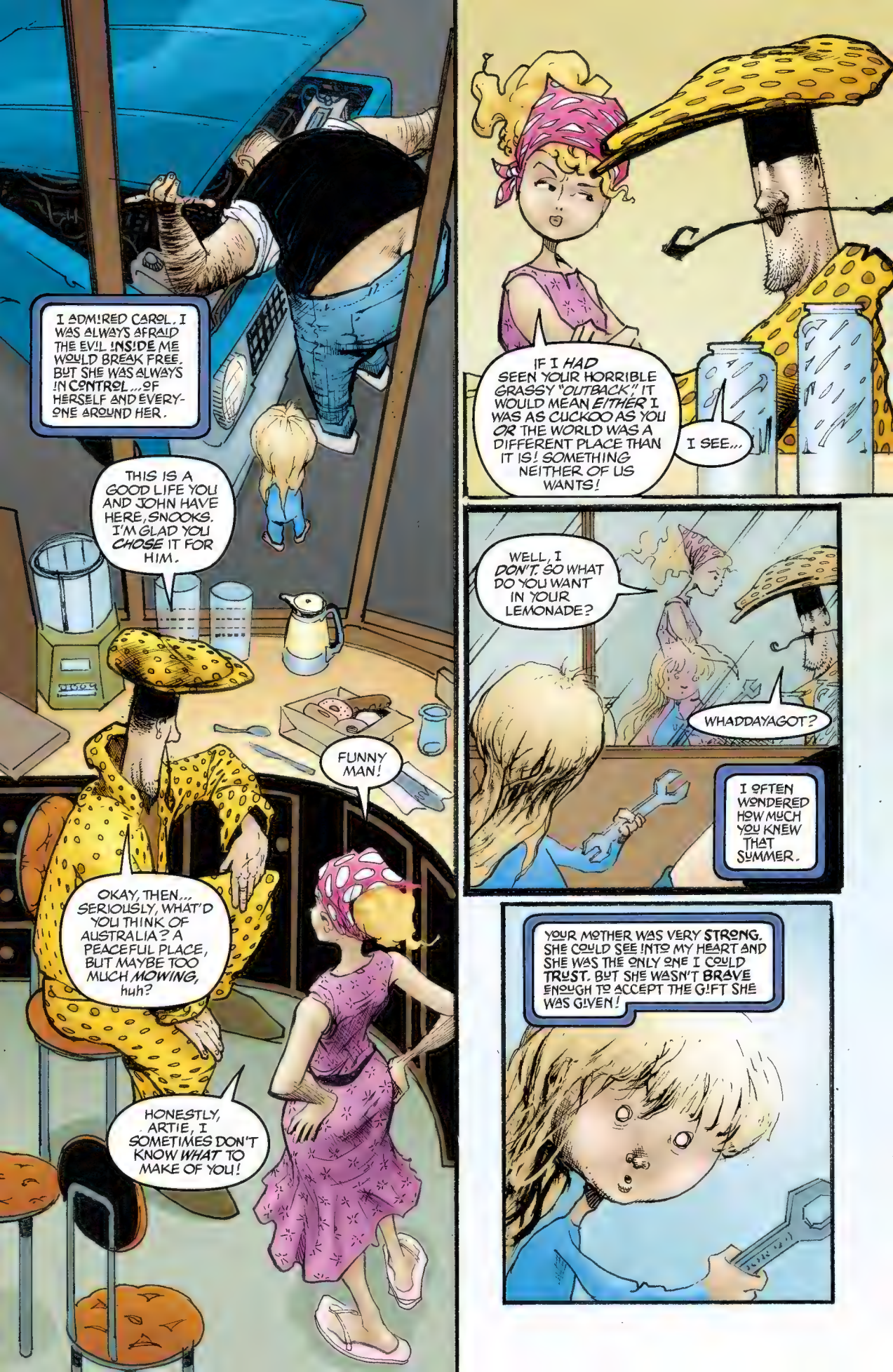
"SO, JULIE... WHERE WERE WE?
"I JUST WANT YOU TO REMEMBER, I ONLY HAVE YOUR BEST INTERESTS AT HEART!"
YEAH, I'LL BET!

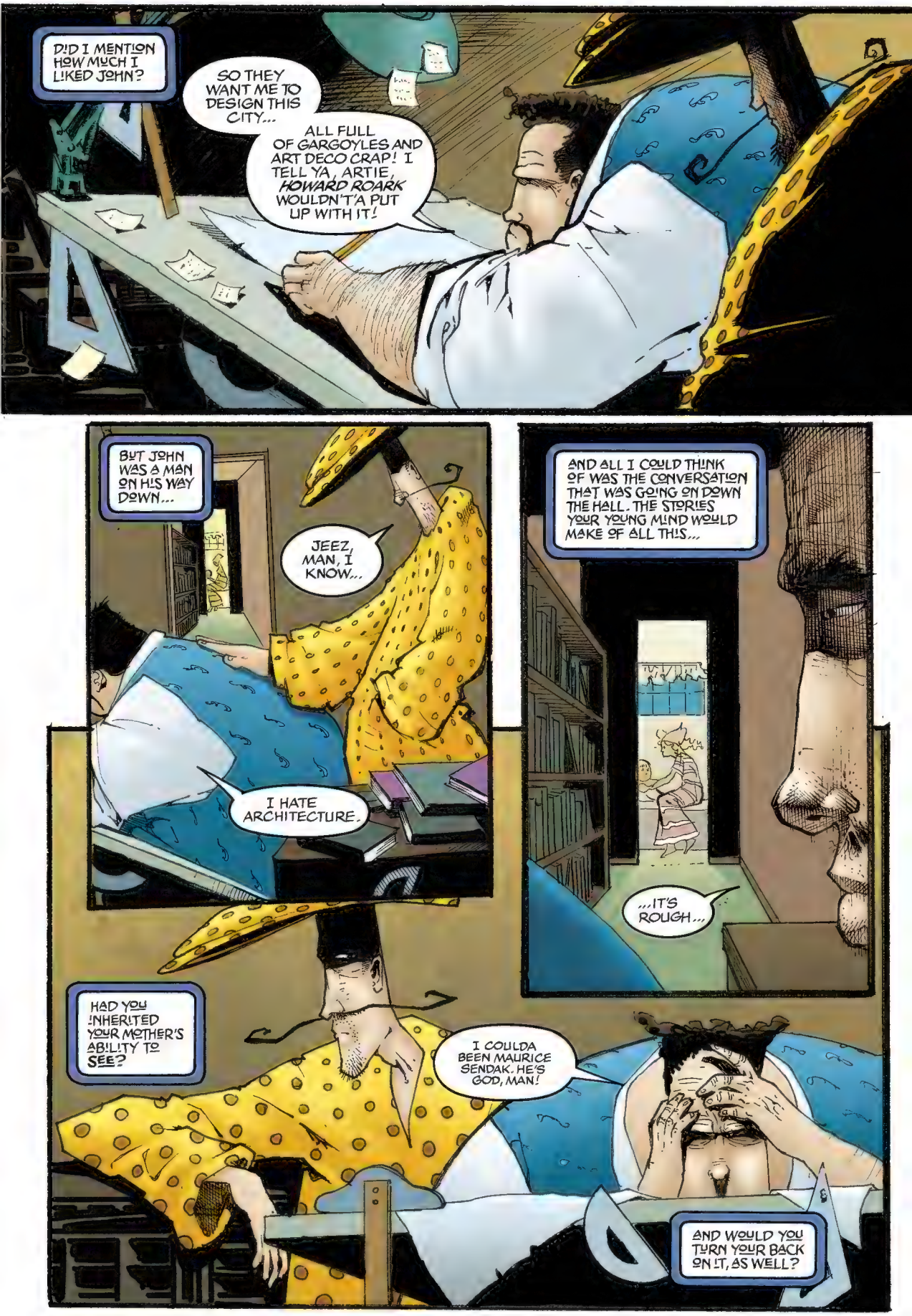

PLINK
HUH?
I HOPE YOU APPRECIATE THIS, JULIE! CRAWLING THROUGH A VENTILATION SHAFT ISN'T EASY, EVEN FOR AN ISZ!
HE'S HAD TO BREAK SEVERAL IMPORTANT LAWS OF PHYSICS TO GET THESE TO YOU...
BECAUSE YOU HAVE TO REMEMBER!
THESE ARE MINE!
QUEEN OF SWAGE
MOMMY
PAD
ME
FAIRY TAIL
EW
UNCLE ARTIE
FLYING WHALE
MY DRAWINGS WHEN I WAS A KID!

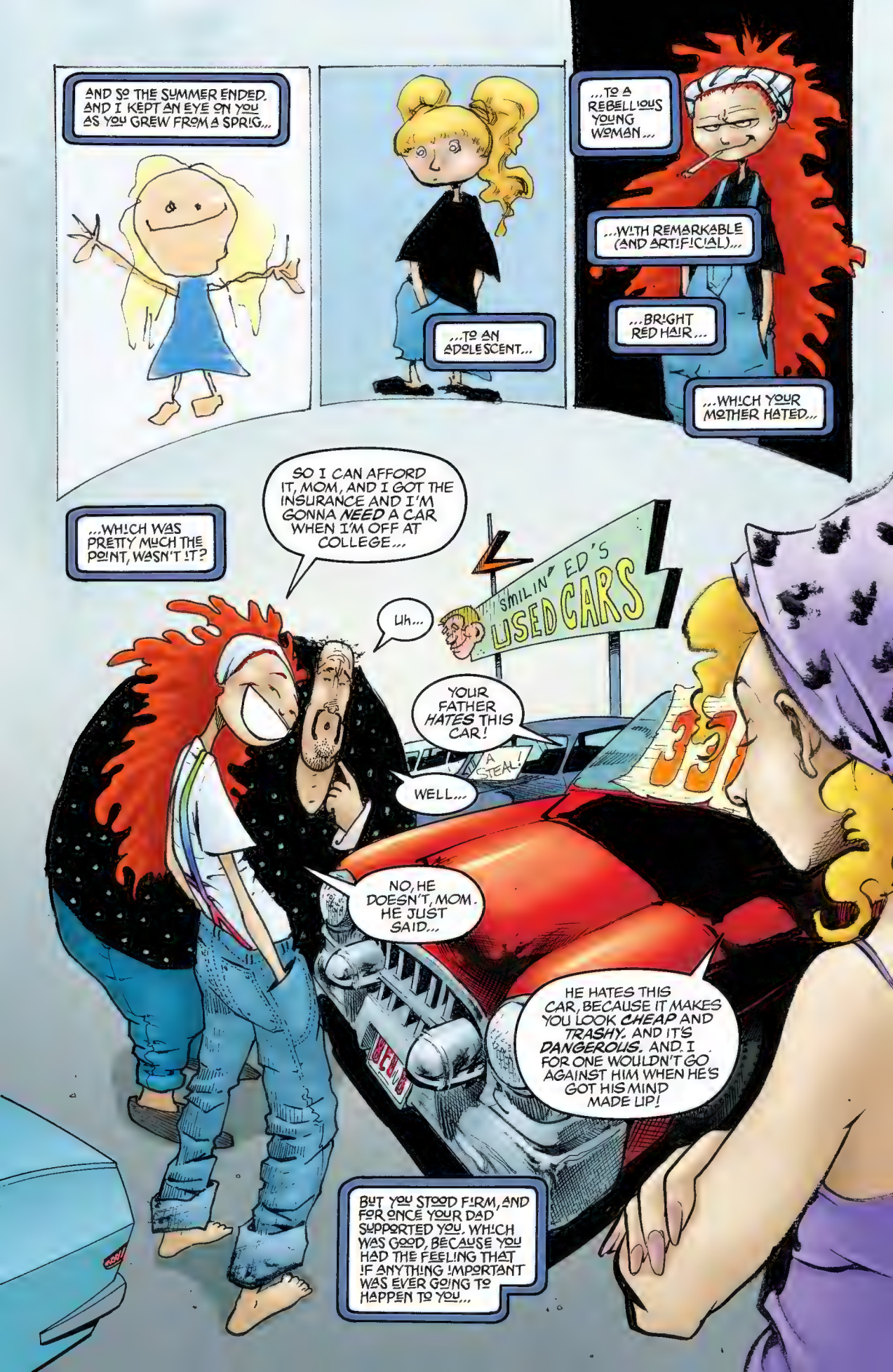
LAST... FairyTale
THAT'S RIGHT, KID! TIME FOR THE...
I hate fairy stories, Uncle Artie!
NOW, JULIE, BE GOOD, OR I'LL SEND YOU TO BED WITHOUT YOUR ROTTING, GUILT-RIDDEN PSYCHIC METAPHORS!

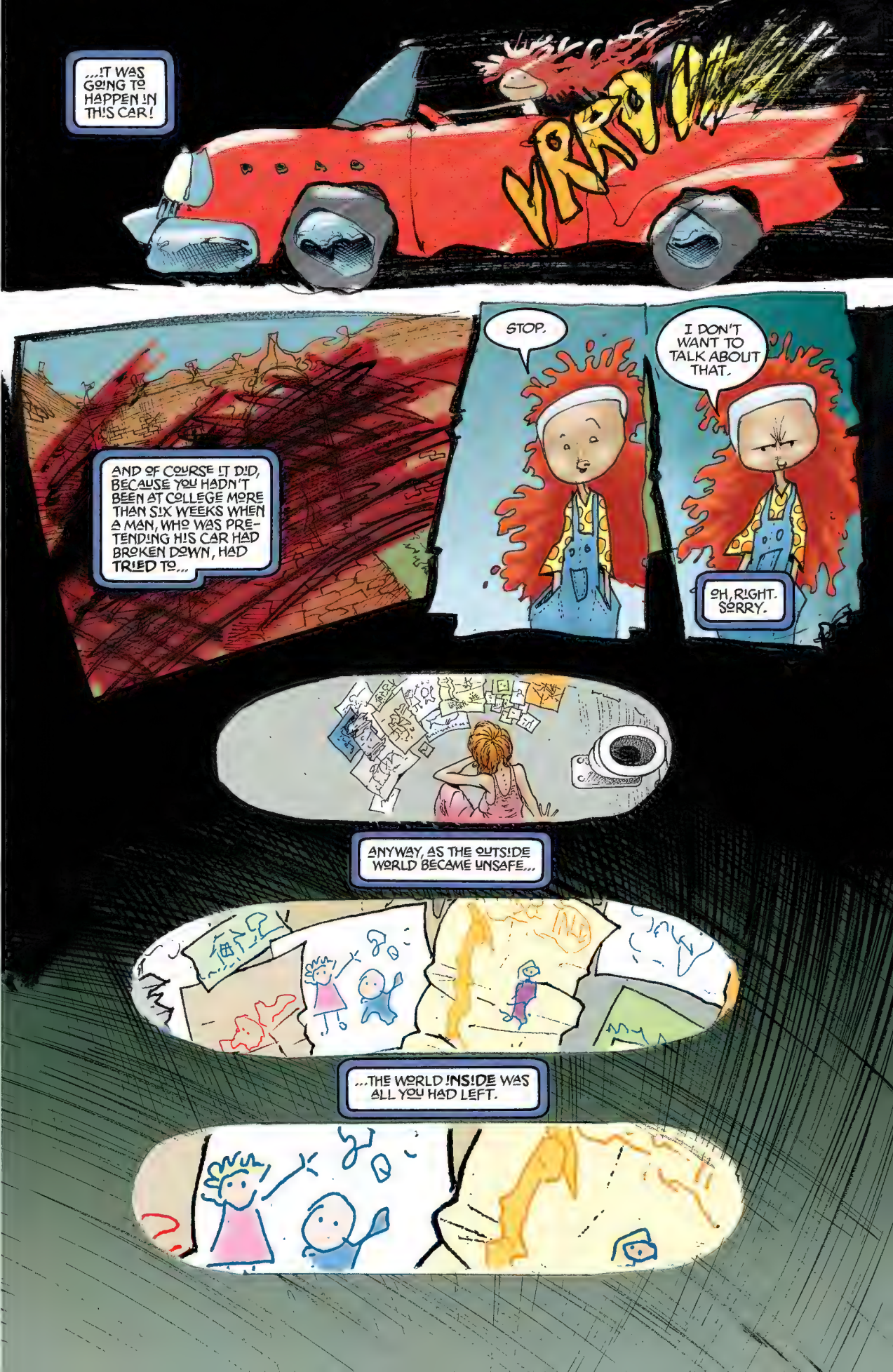

REMEMBER WHEN YOU WERE A LITTLE G!RL, AND YOU'D STAY UP LATE, L!STEN!NG...
"YOU'RE A NUT, ARTIE! YOU'VE ALWAYS BEEN A NUT! THAT'S WHY WE LOVE YA!"
"I'M A NUT, BECAUSE I'M WILLING TO THINK NEW THINGS, BE OPEN TO THE COSMIC QUESTIONS?"
"WELL, YEAH. THE G-MEN SENT YOU TO AUSTRALIA TO STUDY THE ABORIGINES, NOT TO BUY INTO THEIR KOOKY RELIGION!"
GOD, I LOVED YOUR DAD! HE WAS A ST!CK AND HE COULDN'T SEE THE CATTLE FOR THE FIELD M!CE, BUT HE WAS A GREAT GUY. !T WAS TOO BAD I LOST H!M.
"LEMME TELL YA, JOHN. ONCE YOU'VE SEEN THE OUTBACK... THE ROLLING GRASSES, THE TERRIBLE CRITTERS...
"...WELL, YOU REALIZE THAT EVERYTHING ELSE IS A WAKING DREAM."
I THINK I'D DESTROY THE WORLD BEFORE I'D LIVE WITHOUT IT AGAIN!
HA HA! Y'R A CARD, ARTIE!
I'M A LITTLE WORRIED ABOUT JULIE...
GOSH KNOWS WHAT SHE'S GOING TO MAKE OF THESE WILD TALES YOU'VE BEEN TELLING HER!

YES, THEY WERE MY BEST FRIENDS...
IT'S REALLY QUITE LIBERATING.
YOU MEAN THE WAY THEY BELIEVE WE CAN EXIST IN TWO PLACES AT ONCE?
"THAT'S NUTS!"
I COULDN'T STAND IT! ONE WORLD AT A TIME IS ENOUGH FOR ME!
NOW, WHO'D LIKE SOME...
...COFF...
CRACK
CAROL? ARE YOU OKAY?
DON'T WORRY...
...I'LL BE FINE.

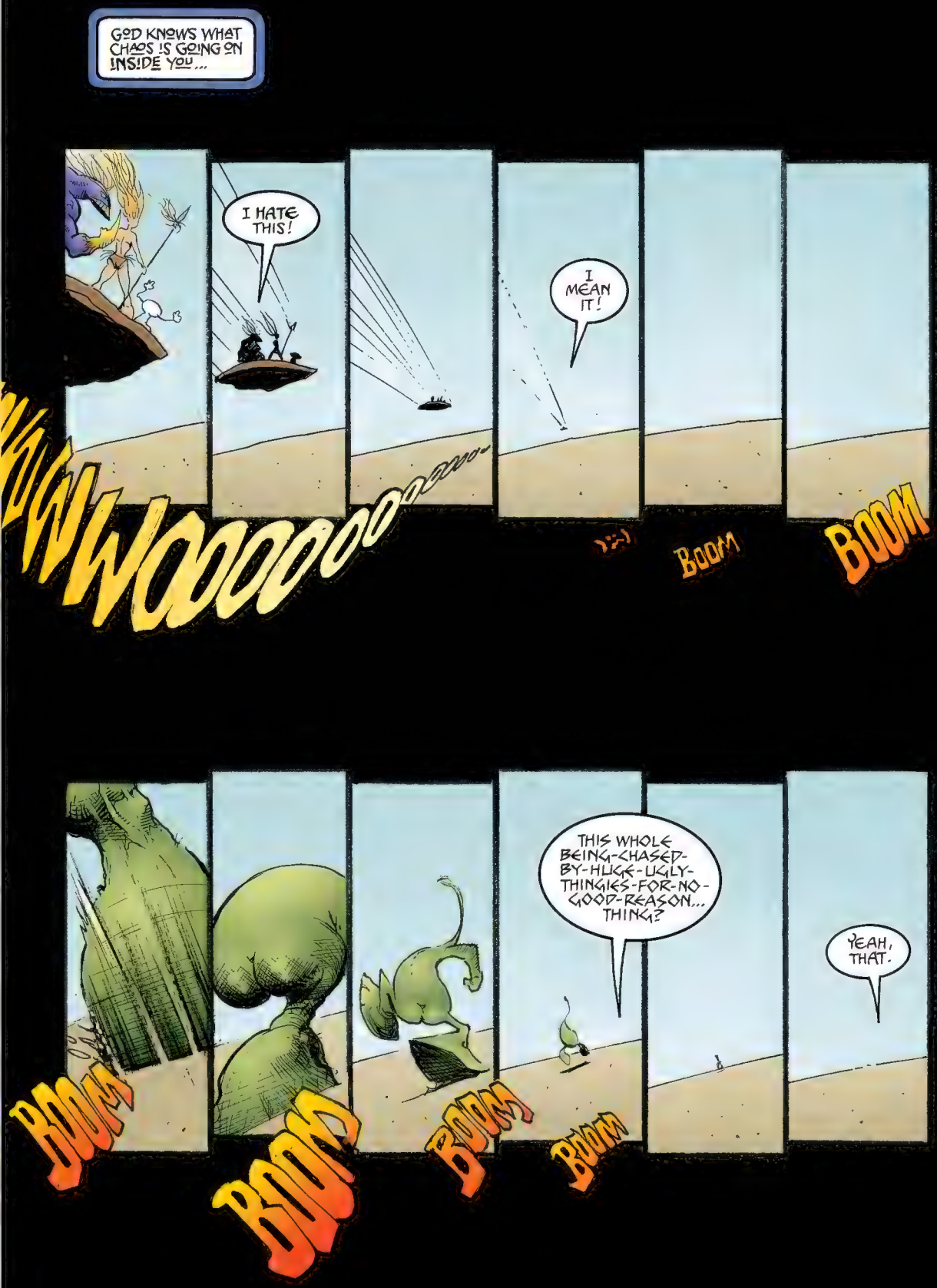

I ADM!RED CAROL. I WAS ALWAYS AFRAID THE EV!L !NS!DE ME WOULD BREAK FREE. BUT SHE WAS ALWAYS !N CONTROL... OF HERSELF AND EVERY-ONE AROUND HER.
THIS IS A GOOD LIFE YOU AND JOHN HAVE HERE, SNOOKS. I'M GLAD YOU CHOSE IT FOR HIM.
FUNNY MAN!
OKAY, THEN... SERIOUSLY, WHAT'D YOU THINK OF AUSTRALIA? A PEACEFUL PLACE, BUT MAYBE TOO MUCH MOWING, huh?
HONESTLY, ARTIE, I SOMETIMES DON'T KNOW WHAT TO MAKE OF YOU!
IF I HAD SEEN YOUR HORRIBLE GRASSY "OUTBACK," IT WOULD MEAN EITHER I WAS AS CUCKOO AS YOU OR THE WORLD WAS A DIFFERENT PLACE THAN IT IS! SOMETHING NEITHER OF US WANTS!
I SEE...
WELL, I DON'T. SO WHAT DO YOU WANT IN YOUR LEMONADE?
WHADDAYAGOT?
I OFTEN WONDERED HOW MUCH YOU KNEW THAT SUMMER.
YOUR MOTHER WAS VERY STRONG. SHE COULD SEE !NTO MY HEART AND SHE WAS THE ONLY ONE I COULD TRUST. BUT SHE WASN'T BRAVE ENOUGH TO ACCEPT THE G!FT SHE WAS G!VEN!

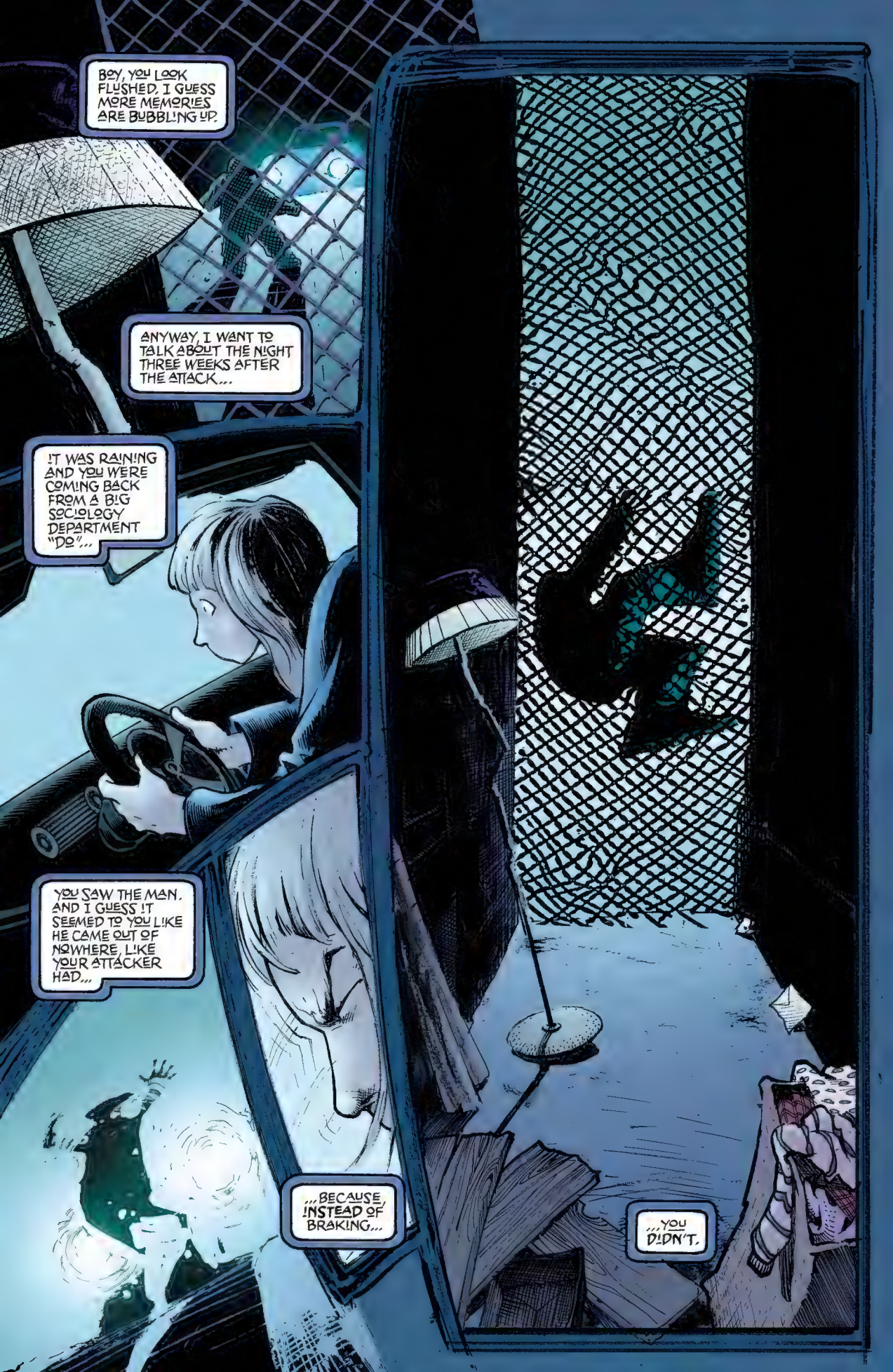

DID I MENTION HOW MUCH I LIKED JOHN?
SO THEY WANT ME TO DESIGN THIS CITY...
ALL FULL OF GARGOYLES AND ART DECO CRAP! I TELL YA, ARTIE, HOWARD ROARK WOULDN'T'A PUT UP WITH IT!
BUT JOHN WAS A MAN ON HIS WAY DOWN...
JEEZ, MAN, I KNOW...
I HATE ARCHITECTURE.
AND ALL I COULD THINK OF WAS THE CONVERSATION THAT WAS GOING ON DOWN THE HALL. THE STORIES YOUR YOUNG MIND WOULD MAKE OF ALL THIS...
...IT'S ROUGH...
HAD YOU INHERITED YOUR MOTHER'S ABILITY TO SEE?
I COULDA BEEN MAURICE SENDAK. HE'S GOD, MAN!
AND WOULD YOU TURN YOUR BACK ON IT, AS WELL?

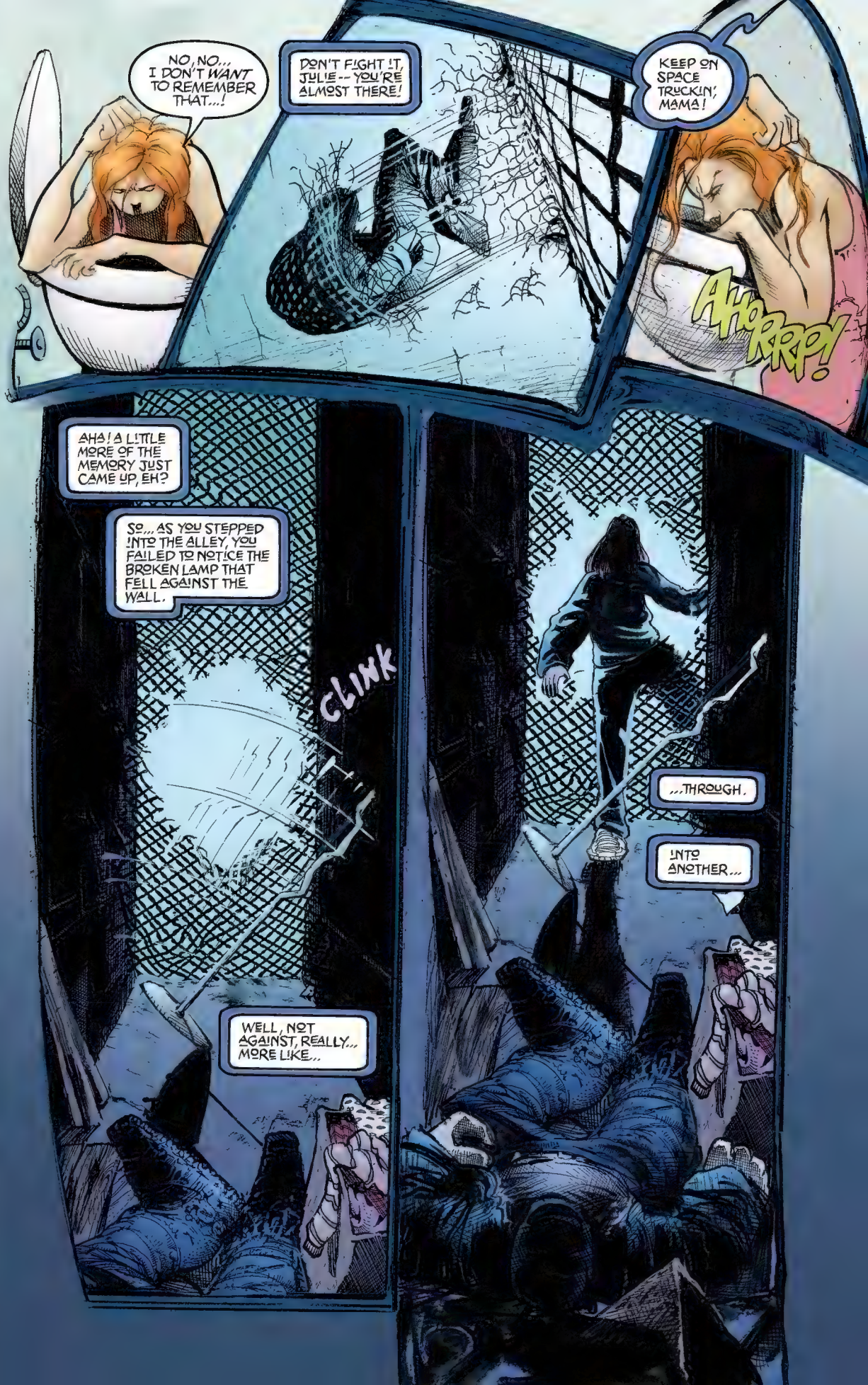

AND SO THE SUMMER ENDED. AND I KEPT AN EYE ON YOU AS YOU GREW FROM A SPRIG...
...TO AN ADOLESCENT...
...TO A REBELLIOUS YOUNG WOMAN...
...WITH REMARKABLE (AND ARTIFICIAL)...
...BRIGHT RED HAIR...
...WHICH YOUR MOTHER HATED...
...WHICH WAS PRETTY MUCH THE POINT, WASN'T IT?
SO I CAN AFFORD IT, MOM, AND I GOT THE INSURANCE AND I'M GONNA NEED A CAR WHEN I'M OFF AT COLLEGE...
SMILIN' ED'S USED CARS
Uh...
YOUR FATHER HATES THIS CAR!
A STEAL!
WELL...
NO, HE DOESN'T, MOM. HE JUST SAID...
HE HATES THIS CAR, BECAUSE IT MAKES YOU LOOK CHEAP AND TRASHY. AND IT'S DANGEROUS. AND I FOR ONE WOULDN'T GO AGAINST HIM WHEN HE'S GOT HIS MIND MADE UP!
BUT YOU STOOD FIRM, AND FOR ONCE YOUR DAD SUPPORTED YOU. WHICH WAS GOOD, BECAUSE YOU HAD THE FEELING THAT IF ANYTHING IMPORTANT WAS EVER GOING TO HAPPEN TO YOU...

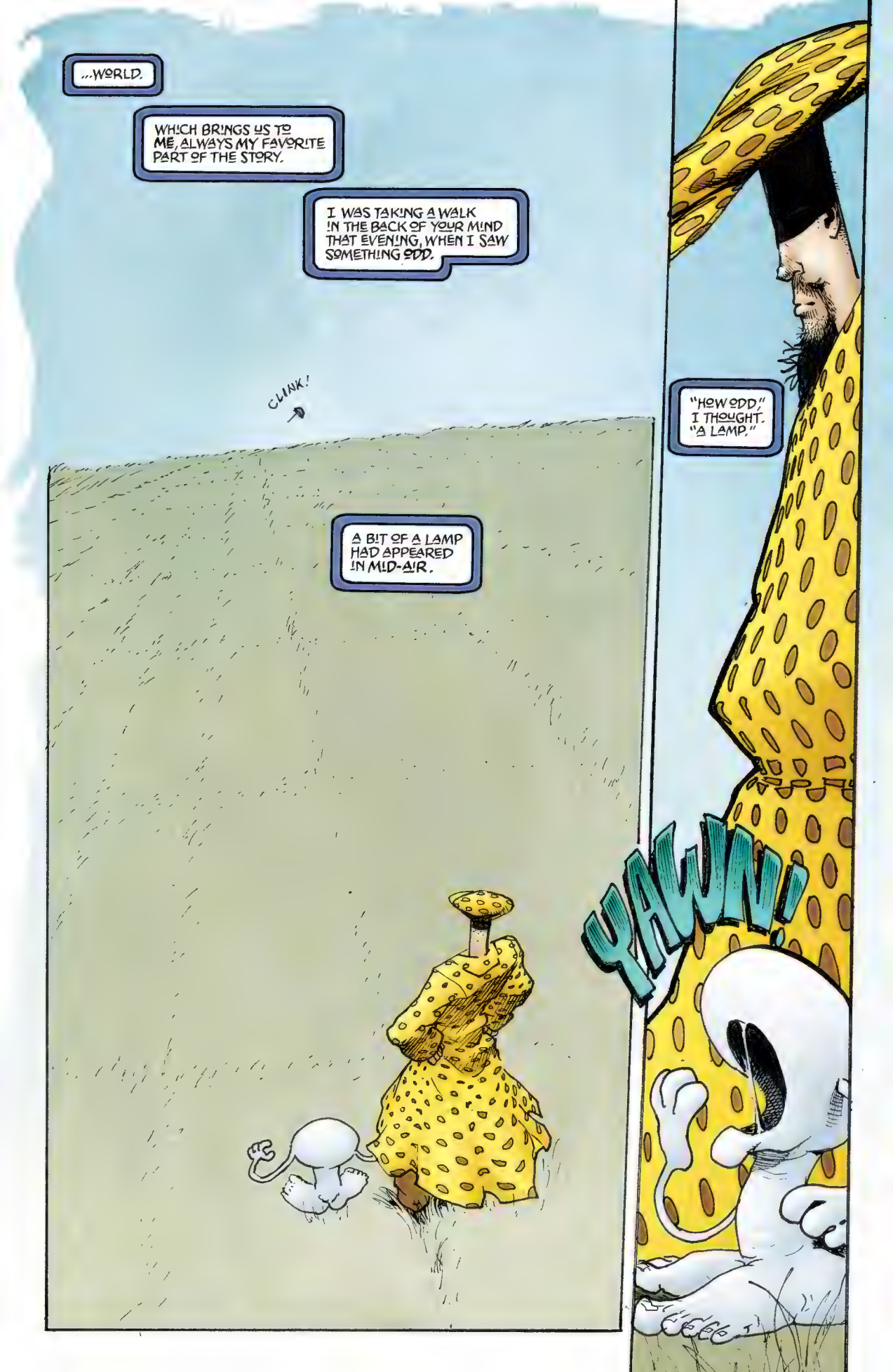

...IT WAS GOING TO HAPPEN IN THIS CAR!
VRRRR
AND OF COURSE IT DID, BECAUSE YOU HADN'T BEEN AT COLLEGE MORE THAN SIX WEEKS WHEN A MAN, WHO WAS PRETENDING HIS CAR HAD BROKEN DOWN, HAD TRIED TO...
STOP.
I DON'T WANT TO TALK ABOUT THAT.
OH, RIGHT. SORRY.
ANYWAY, AS THE OUTSIDE WORLD BECAME UNSAFE...
...THE WORLD INSIDE WAS ALL YOU HAD LEFT.

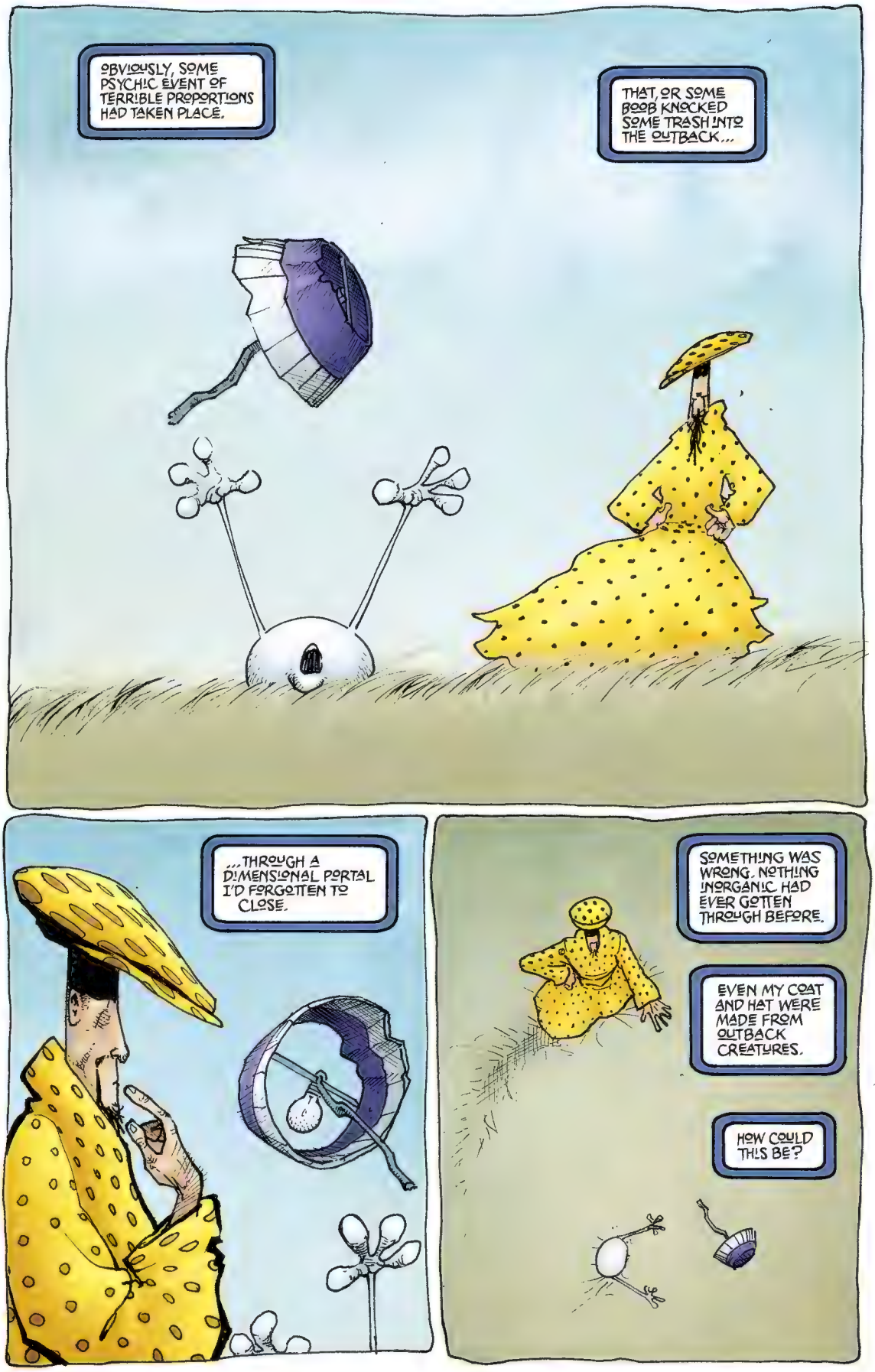
SO, EXCEPT FOR THE NIGHT TERRORS...
...AND THOSE PESKY GRADES WHICH JUST KEPT GOING DOWN...
...YOU OTHERWISE SURVIVED THE WHOLE THING BEAUTIFULLY...
JEEZ... HE LIKED MOM? THAT'S PROBABLY THE GROSSEST THING HE'S SAID!
...WHICH EXPLAINS WHY YOU'RE PREGNANT, LIVING IN A WORLD OF FANTASY AND LIES, AND HAVEN'T LEFT YOUR BATHROOM FOR A WEEK!

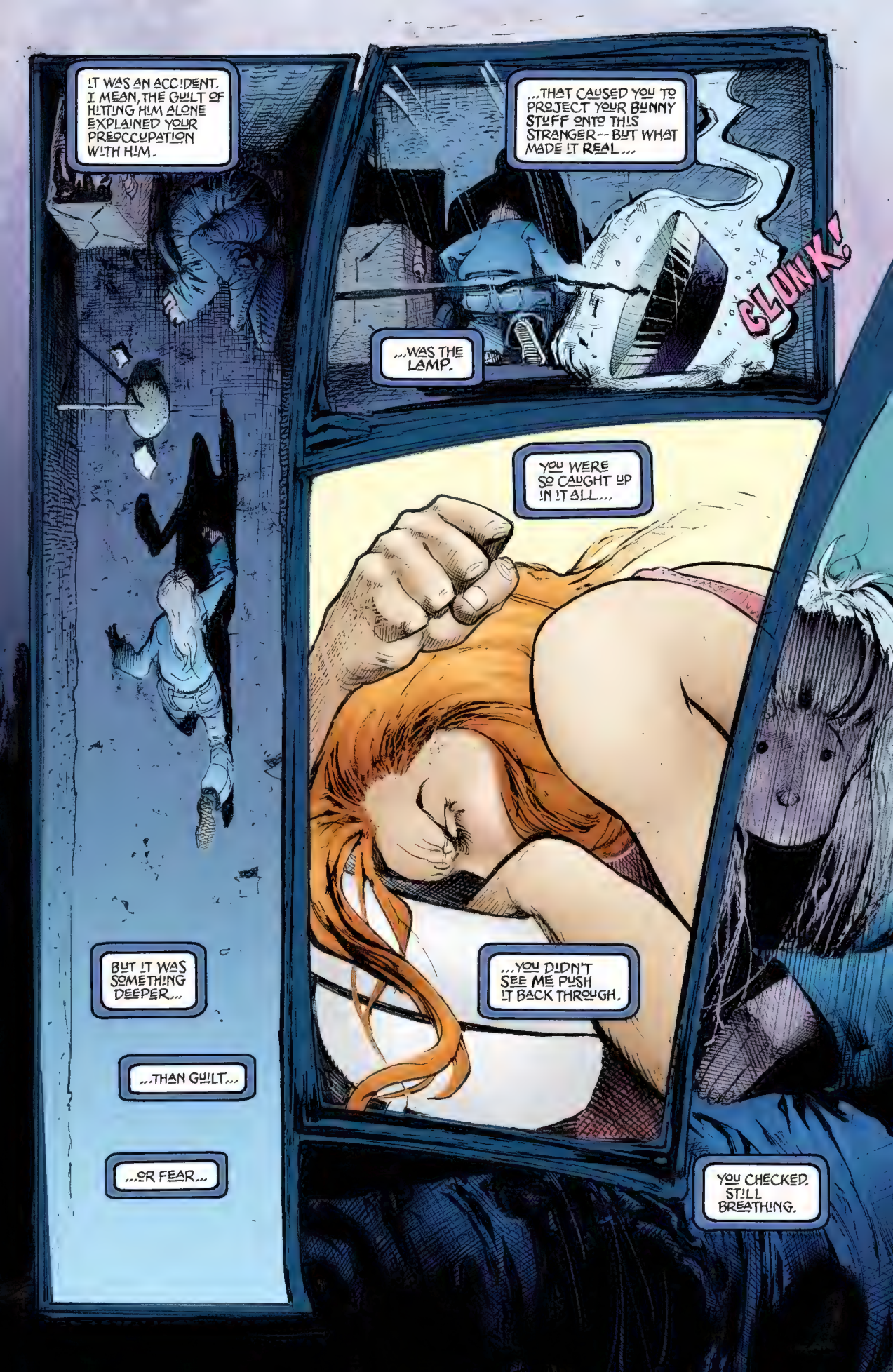

GOD KNOWS WHAT CHAOS IS GOING ON INSIDE YOU...
I HATE THIS!
I MEAN IT!
WOOOOOOOOOO
BOOM
BOOM
BOOM
BOOM
BOOM
BOOM
THIS WHOLE BEING-CHASED-BY-HUGE-UGLY-THINGIES-FOR-NO-GOOD-REASON... THING?
YEAH, THAT.

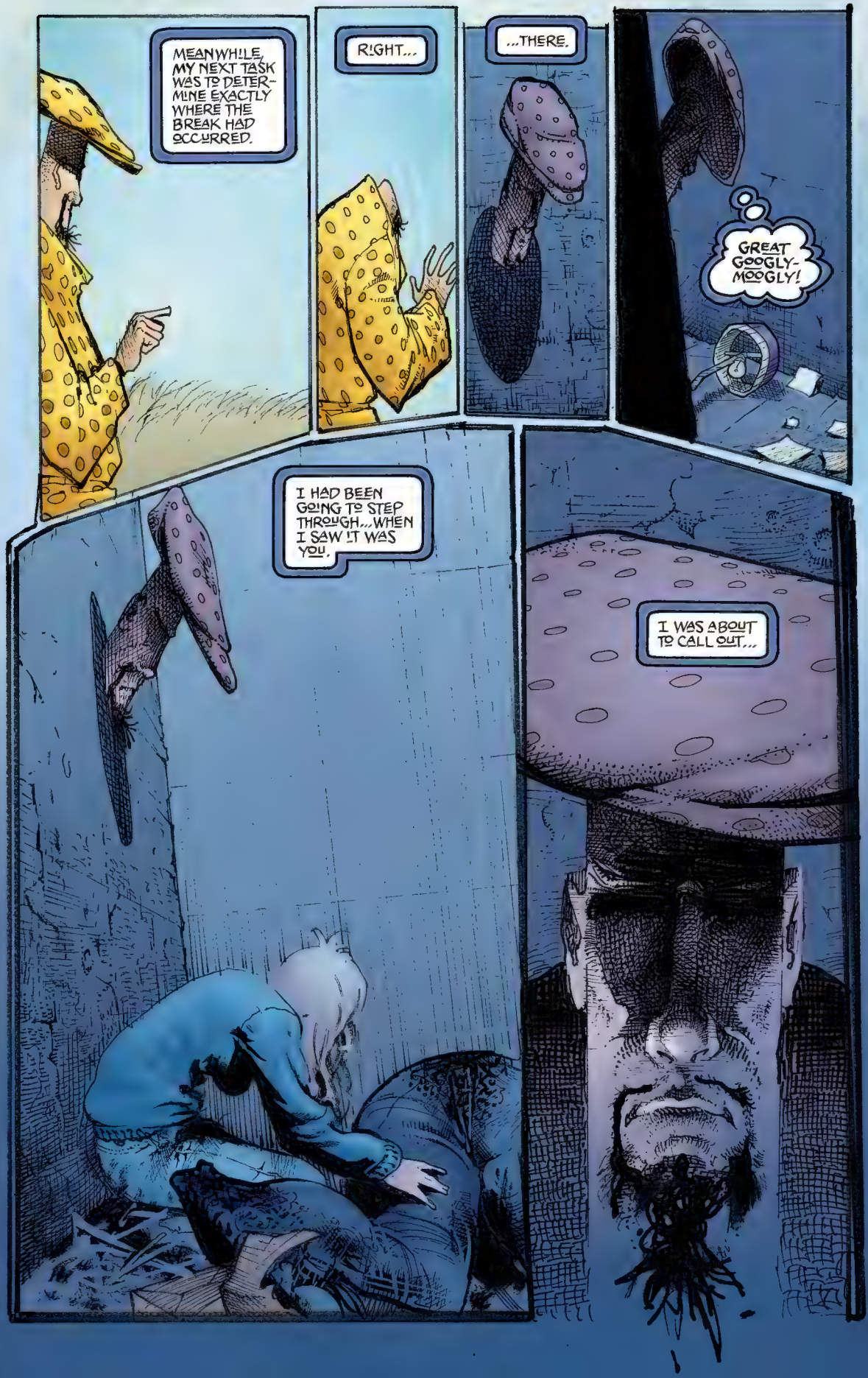

BOY, YOU LOOK FLUSHED. I GUESS MORE MEMORIES ARE BUBBLING UP.
ANYWAY, I WANT TO TALK ABOUT THE NIGHT THREE WEEKS AFTER THE ATTACK...
IT WAS RAINING AND YOU WERE COMING BACK FROM A BIG SOCIOLOGY DEPARTMENT "DO"...
YOU SAW THE MAN, AND I GUESS IT SEEMED TO YOU LIKE HE CAME OUT OF NOWHERE, LIKE YOUR ATTACKER HAD...
...BECAUSE INSTEAD OF BRAKING...
...YOU DIDN'T.


NO, NO... I DON'T WANT TO REMEMBER THAT...!
DON'T FIGHT IT, JULIE -- YOU'RE ALMOST THERE!
KEEP ON SPACE TRUCKIN', MAMA!
AHHRRRP!
AHA! A LITTLE MORE OF THE MEMORY JUST CAME UP, EH?
SO... AS YOU STEPPED INTO THE ALLEY, YOU FAILED TO NOTICE THE BROKEN LAMP THAT FELL AGAINST THE WALL.
CLINK
WELL, NOT AGAINST, REALLY... MORE LIKE...
...THROUGH.
INTO ANOTHER...

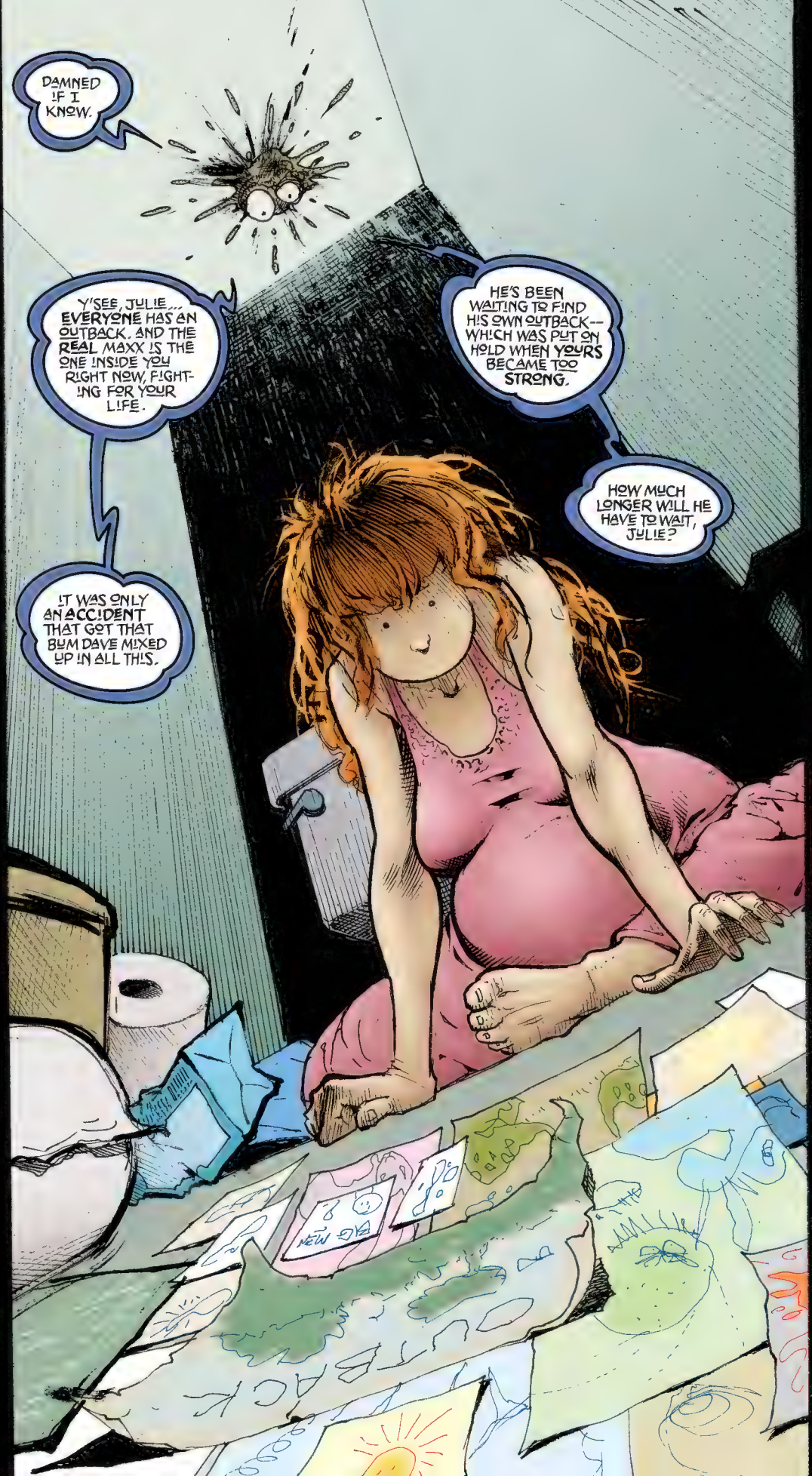

...WORLD.
WHICH BRINGS US TO ME, ALWAYS MY FAVORITE PART OF THE STORY.
I WAS TAKING A WALK IN THE BACK OF YOUR MIND THAT EVENING, WHEN I SAW SOMETHING ODD.
CLINK!
A BIT OF A LAMP HAD APPEARED IN MID-AIR.
"HOW ODD," I THOUGHT. "A LAMP."
YAWN!


OBVIOUSLY, SOME PSYCHIC EVENT OF TERRIBLE PROPORTIONS HAD TAKEN PLACE.
THAT, OR SOME BOOB KNOCKED SOME TRASH INTO THE OUTBACK...
...THROUGH A DIMENSIONAL PORTAL I'D FORGOTTEN TO CLOSE.
SOMETHING WAS WRONG. NOTHING INORGANIC HAD EVER GOTTEN THROUGH BEFORE.
EVEN MY COAT AND HAT WERE MADE FROM OUTBACK CREATURES.
HOW COULD THIS BE?


IT WAS AN ACCIDENT. I MEAN, THE GUILT OF HITTING HIM ALONE EXPLAINED YOUR PREOCCUPATION WITH HIM.
BUT IT WAS SOMETHING DEEPER...
...THAN GUILT...
...OR FEAR...
...THAT CAUSED YOU TO PROJECT YOUR BUNNY STUFF ONTO THIS STRANGER-- BUT WHAT MADE IT REAL...
...WAS THE LAMP.
CLUNK!
YOU WERE SO CAUGHT UP IN IT ALL...
...YOU DIDN'T SEE ME PUSH IT BACK THROUGH.
YOU CHECKED. STILL BREATHING.


MEANWHILE, MY NEXT TASK WAS TO DETERMINE EXACTLY WHERE THE BREAK HAD OCCURRED.
RIGHT...
...THERE.
GREAT GOOGLY-MOOGLY!
I HAD BEEN GOING TO STEP THROUGH...WHEN I SAW IT WAS YOU.
I WAS ABOUT TO CALL OUT...

...WHEN YOU COVERED UP THE BODY AND DROVE AWAY...
POP
FFSSSSSS
POP
POP
POP
FSSSS
POP
POP
...LEAVING BEHIND...
...GOD-KNOWS-WHAT.
IT WAS WONDERFUL.
THE SILKEN PURPLE OF THE LAMPSHADE BEGAN TO FLOW OVER EVERY INCH OF THE STILL FORM.
WAS THERE SOMETHING MAGICAL ABOUT THE LAMPSHADE ITSELF, SOME STRANGE PROPERTY THAT HAD ALLOWED IT TO PENETRATE INTO THE OUTBACK ALL ON ITS OWN?
OR WAS IT ALL YOUR DOING?

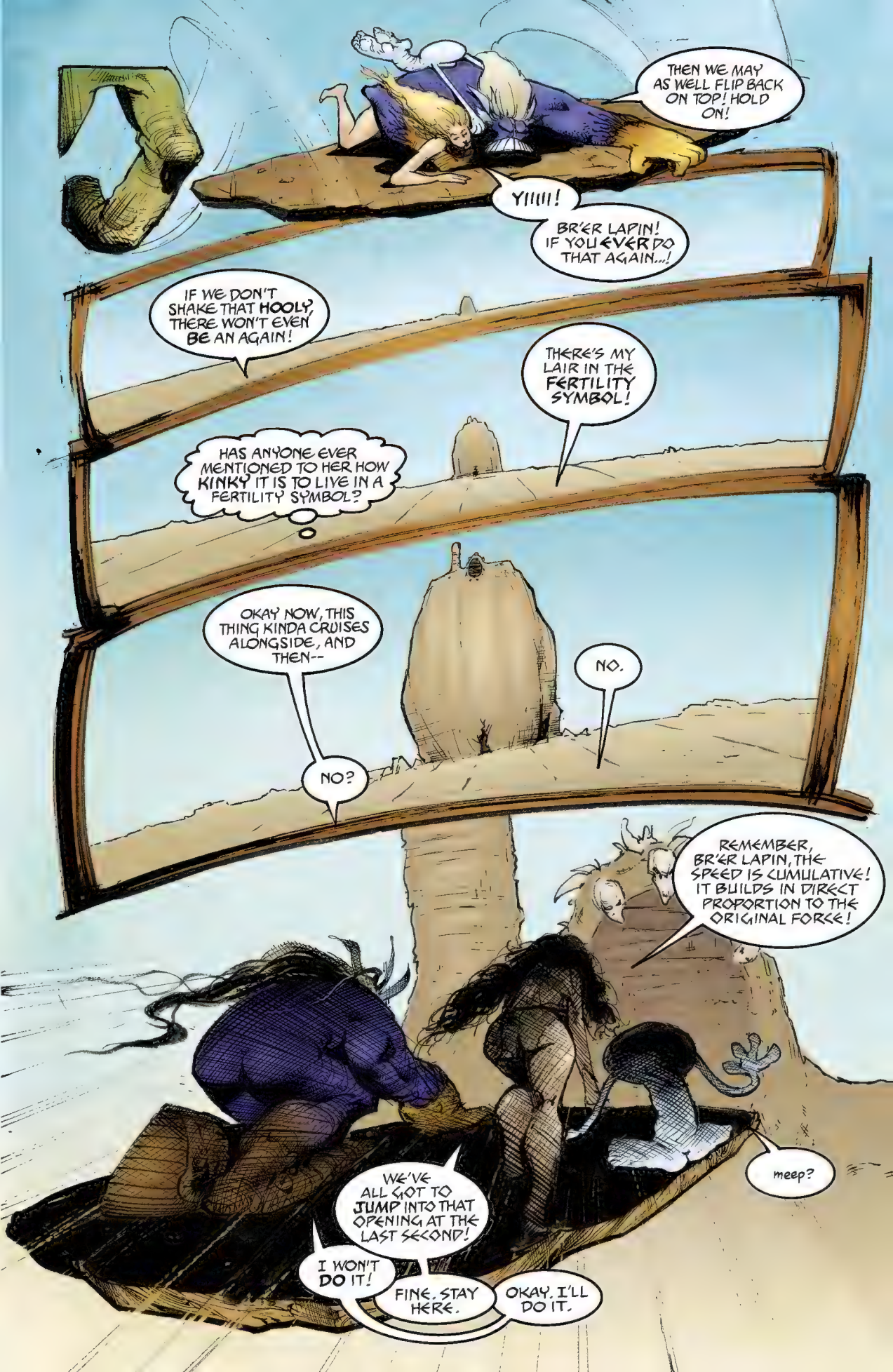

DAMNED IF I KNOW.
Y'SEE, JULIE... EVERYONE HAS AN OUTBACK. AND THE REAL MAXX IS THE ONE INSIDE YOU RIGHT NOW, FIGHTING FOR YOUR LIFE.
IT WAS ONLY AN ACCIDENT THAT GOT THAT BUM DAVE MIXED UP IN ALL THIS.
HE'S BEEN WAITING TO FIND HIS OWN OUTBACK-- WHICH WAS PUT ON HOLD WHEN YOURS BECAME TOO STRONG.
HOW MUCH LONGER WILL HE HAVE TO WAIT, JULIE?

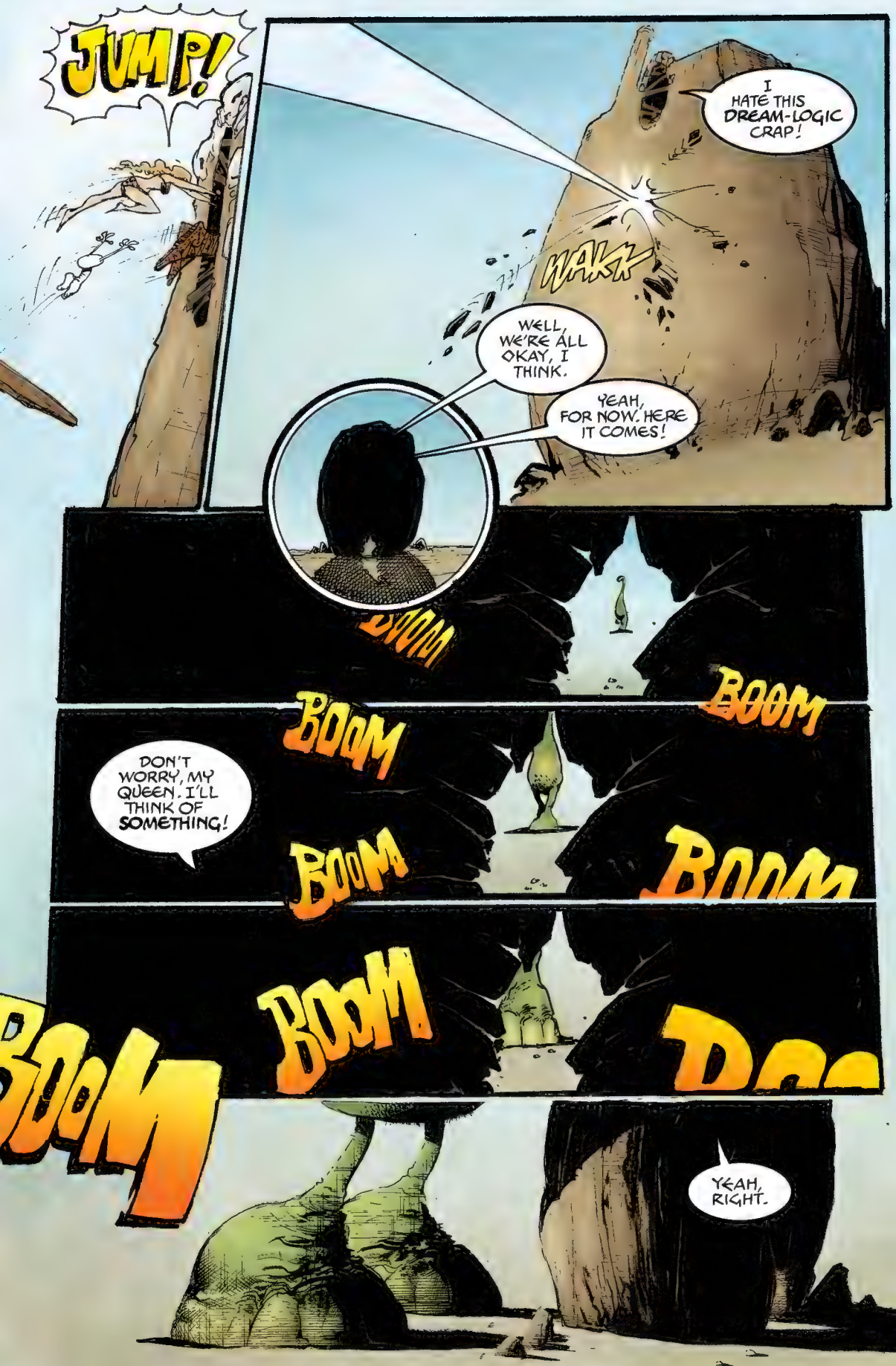
DID I MENTION HOW MUCH I HATE THIS?
SEVERAL TIMES, BR'ER LAPIN.
SLAP!
BOOM
OKAY, JUST CHECKING.
SLAP!
BOOM
BOOM
BOOM
BOOM
BOOM
NEXT:
STICKY FEET, HAPPY FEET!

Chapter Two
THE MAXX

MY PLAN WORKED. I THINK WE'VE LOST IT.
REALLY, BR'ER LAPIN?
MEEP
MEEP
ABSOLUTELY! IT CAN'T SEE US UNDER HERE. AND IT CAN'T TRACK WHAT IT CAN'T SEE!
WELL, IF YOU'RE SURE...
I'M POSITIVE! WE'VE GOT THE HOOLY COMPLETELY FOOLED...!
I JUST WONDER WHY I STILL HAVE THE FEELING WE'RE BEING FOLLOWED?
WHUP

BECAUSE THE HOOLY IS BLIND, YOU IDIOT! HE'S TRACKING US BY SMELL!


THEN WE MAY AS WELL FLIP BACK ON TOP! HOLD ON!
YIIII!
BR'ER LAPIN! IF YOU EVER DO THAT AGAIN...!
IF WE DON'T SHAKE THAT HOOLY, THERE WON'T EVEN BE AN AGAIN!
THERE'S MY LAIR IN THE FERTILITY SYMBOL!
HAS ANYONE EVER MENTIONED TO HER HOW KINKY IT IS TO LIVE IN A FERTILITY SYMBOL?
OKAY NOW, THIS THING KINDA CRUISES ALONGSIDE, AND THEN--
NO?
NO.
REMEMBER, BR'ER LAPIN, THE SPEED IS CUMULATIVE! IT BUILDS IN DIRECT PROPORTION TO THE ORIGINAL FORCE!
meep?
WE'VE ALL GOT TO JUMP INTO THAT OPENING AT THE LAST SECOND!
I WON'T DO IT!
FINE. STAY HERE.
OKAY. I'LL DO IT.


JUMP!
I HATE THIS DREAM-LOGIC CRAP!
WHAM
WELL, WE'RE ALL OKAY, I THINK.
YEAH, FOR NOW. HERE IT COMES!
BOOM
BOOM
BOOM
DON'T WORRY, MY QUEEN. I'LL THINK OF SOMETHING!
BOOM
BOOM
BOOM
BOOM
YEAH, RIGHT.

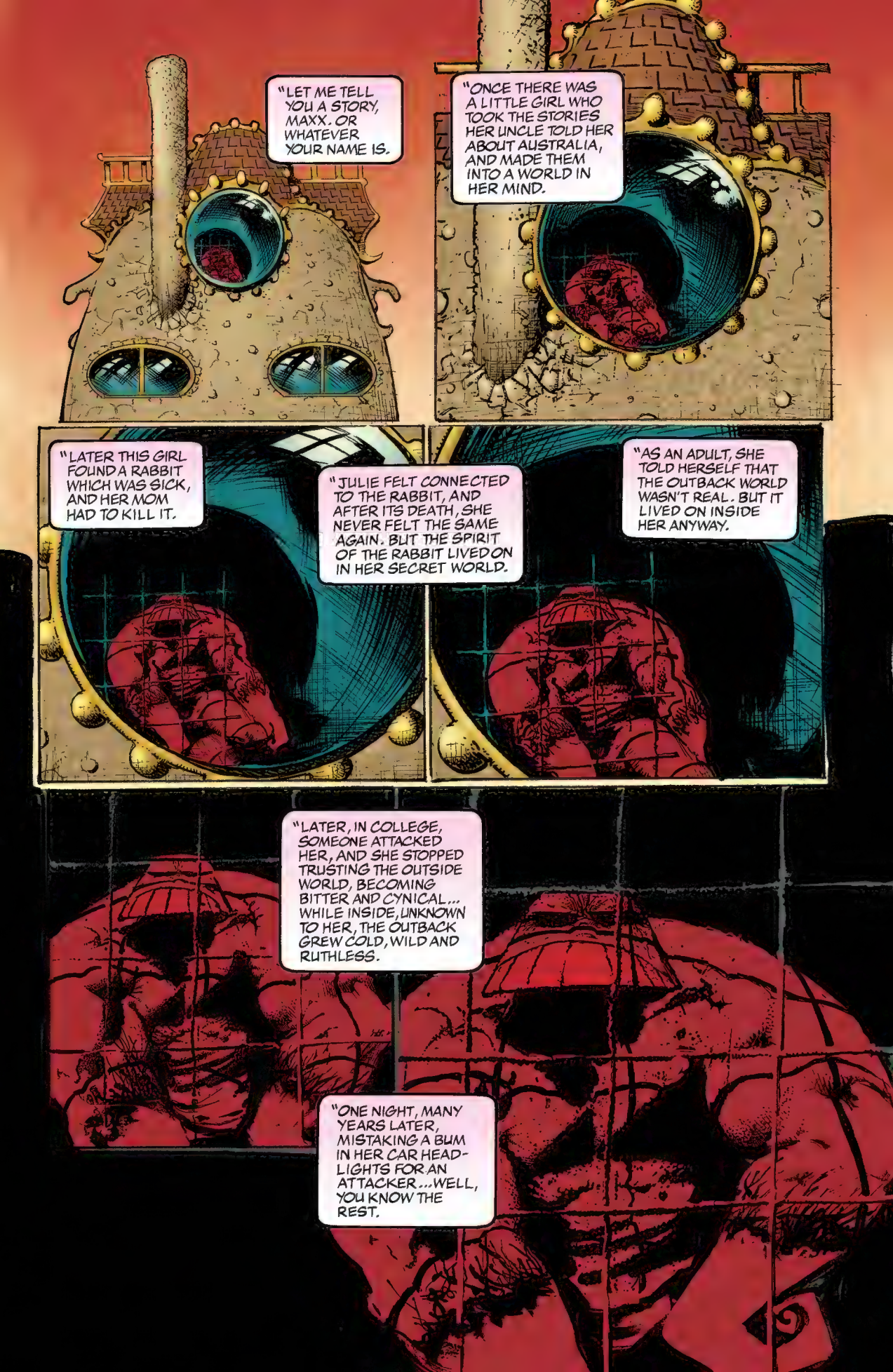
GRUNK!
THIS SHOULDN'T BE HAPPENING! THE HOOLY IS THE SPIRIT OF HEALING AND PROTECTION HERE! MINDLESS VIOLENCE IS NOT THE WAY OF THE HOOLY.
GONE MUST BE INSIDE HER SOMEHOW, PERVERTING HER!
NOW THERE'S A FREUDIAN IMAGE!
THE LAND CAN ONLY BE HEALED WHEN THE HOOLY REGURGITATES THE SPIRIT OF GONE!
YOU MEAN SHE'S GOT TO THROW GONE UP?
DON'T BE CRUDE, BR'ER LAPIN.
HEY, YOU'RE THE ONE WHO BROUGHT IT UP!
"HEY, LOOK!"
"WHAT'S THAT?"

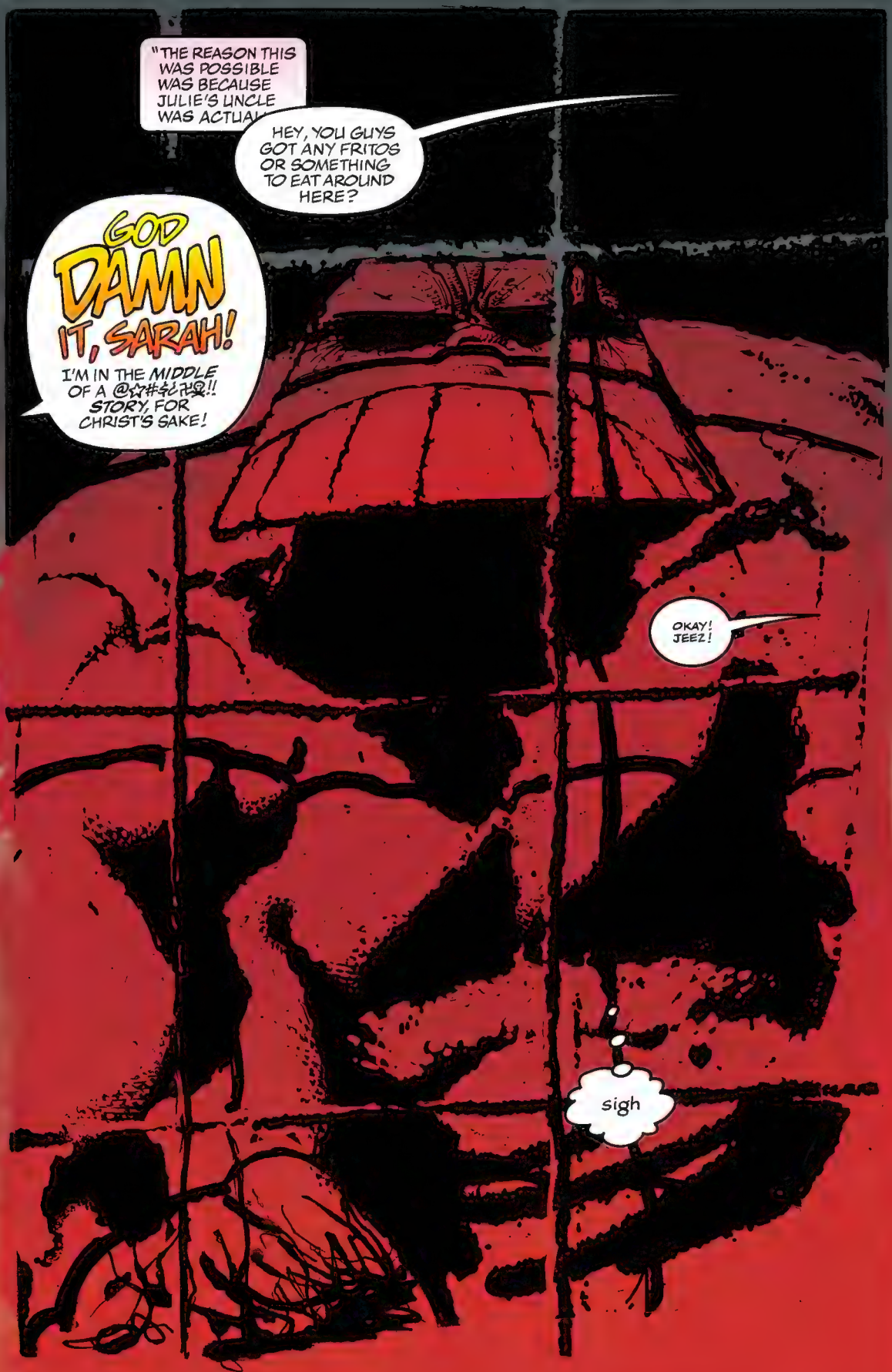
"IT MUST BE THE CHIP YOU KNOCKED OFF THE VOLCANO, RETURNING WITH A DAY'S WORTH OF MOMENTUM!
"ITS MASS MUST BE INCREASED BY A THOUSANDFOLD!"
SNIFF
SNIFF
SNIFF
"IT MISSED HER! IT MISSED THE HOOLY!"

NO IT DIDN'T.
CRASH
THE HOOLY'S GETTING UP AND WANDERING AWAY. WE WON!
THE IMPACT MUST'VE KNOCKED THE GONE RIGHT OUT OF HER!
WELL, WE'VE BEEN TO THE VOLCANO, EXPELLED THE POISON, SAVED THE OUTBACK, FULFILLED EVERY CONDITION... SO...

WHAT NOW?
I DON'T KNOW, MAXX...
YOU TELL ME. MY OUTBACK HAS BEEN CLEANSED. MY NEW HOUSE IS FINISHED. AND THOUGH PREGNANT, I'M NO LONGER SICK AS A DOG.
SO WHY DON'T I FEEL ANY BETTER?
MEX
I'M LEAVING, JULIE.

I...I DON'T BELONG HERE. I'M NOT THE MAXX NOW. NOT REALLY. I HAVE TO FIND THE LIFE I HAD BEFORE THE ACCID
FINE.
THEN GO. GOD KNOWS I'M NOT HOLDING YOU HERE.
BY THE WAY, WHY ARE YOU STILL WEARING THE COSTUME?
I'M NOT SURE. MAYBE IT'S EASIER IF YOU AND SARAH DON'T SEE WHAT I REALLY LOOK LIKE. EASIER FOR ME, ANYWAY.
DO YOU REMEMBER WHEN WE FIRST MET, JULIE? AT LEAST WHEN I FIRST THOUGHT IT WAS?
DON'T BE SO BITTER. MANY GREAT RELATIONSHIPS BEGIN WITH A HIT-AND-RUN.
SARAH, HONEY, THIS IS BETWEEN US ADULTS. WHY DON'T YOU--
RIGHT. I'M ADULT ENOUGH TO SAVE BOTH OF YOUR BUTTS, JUST NOT ADULT ENOUGH TO SIT AROUND AND WATCH YOU EMBARRASS YOURSELVES!


"LET ME TELL YOU A STORY, MAXX. OR WHATEVER YOUR NAME IS.
"ONCE THERE WAS A LITTLE GIRL WHO TOOK THE STORIES HER UNCLE TOLD HER ABOUT AUSTRALIA, AND MADE THEM INTO A WORLD IN HER MIND.
"LATER THIS GIRL FOUND A RABBIT WHICH WAS SICK, AND HER MOM HAD TO KILL IT.
"JULIE FELT CONNECTED TO THE RABBIT, AND AFTER ITS DEATH, SHE NEVER FELT THE SAME AGAIN. BUT THE SPIRIT OF THE RABBIT LIVED ON IN HER SECRET WORLD.
"AS AN ADULT, SHE TOLD HERSELF THAT THE OUTBACK WORLD WASN'T REAL. BUT IT LIVED ON INSIDE HER ANYWAY.
"LATER, IN COLLEGE, SOMEONE ATTACKED HER, AND SHE STOPPED TRUSTING THE OUTSIDE WORLD, BECOMING BITTER AND CYNICAL... WHILE INSIDE, UNKNOWN TO HER, THE OUTBACK GREW COLD, WILD AND RUTHLESS.
"ONE NIGHT, MANY YEARS LATER, MISTAKING A BUM IN HER CAR HEAD-LIGHTS FOR AN ATTACKER...WELL, YOU KNOW THE REST.


"THE REASON THIS WAS POSSIBLE WAS BECAUSE JULIE'S UNCLE WAS ACTUAL
HEY, YOU GUYS GOT ANY FRITOS OR SOMETHING TO EAT AROUND HERE?
GOD DAMN IT, SARAH!
I'M IN THE MIDDLE OF A @☆#&?☒!! STORY, FOR CHRIST'S SAKE!
OKAY! JEEZ!
sigh

WHEN DID YOU KNOW GONE WAS YOUR UNCLE?

HE *WASN'T*, NOT THE WAY YOU MEAN. HE WAS JUST A FRIEND OF THE FAMILY.

SO WE'RE *NOT* COUSINS?

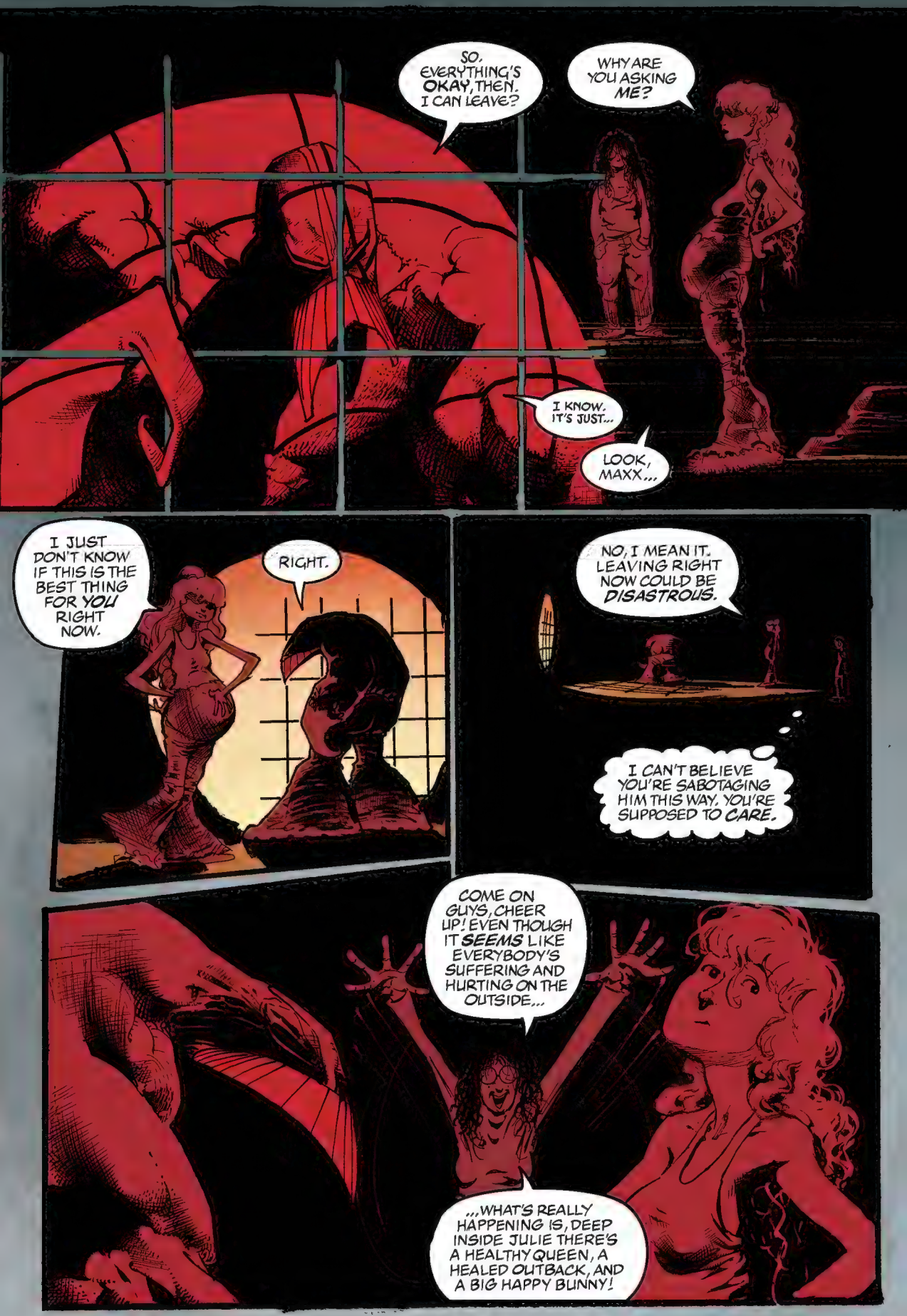
DISAPPOINTED?

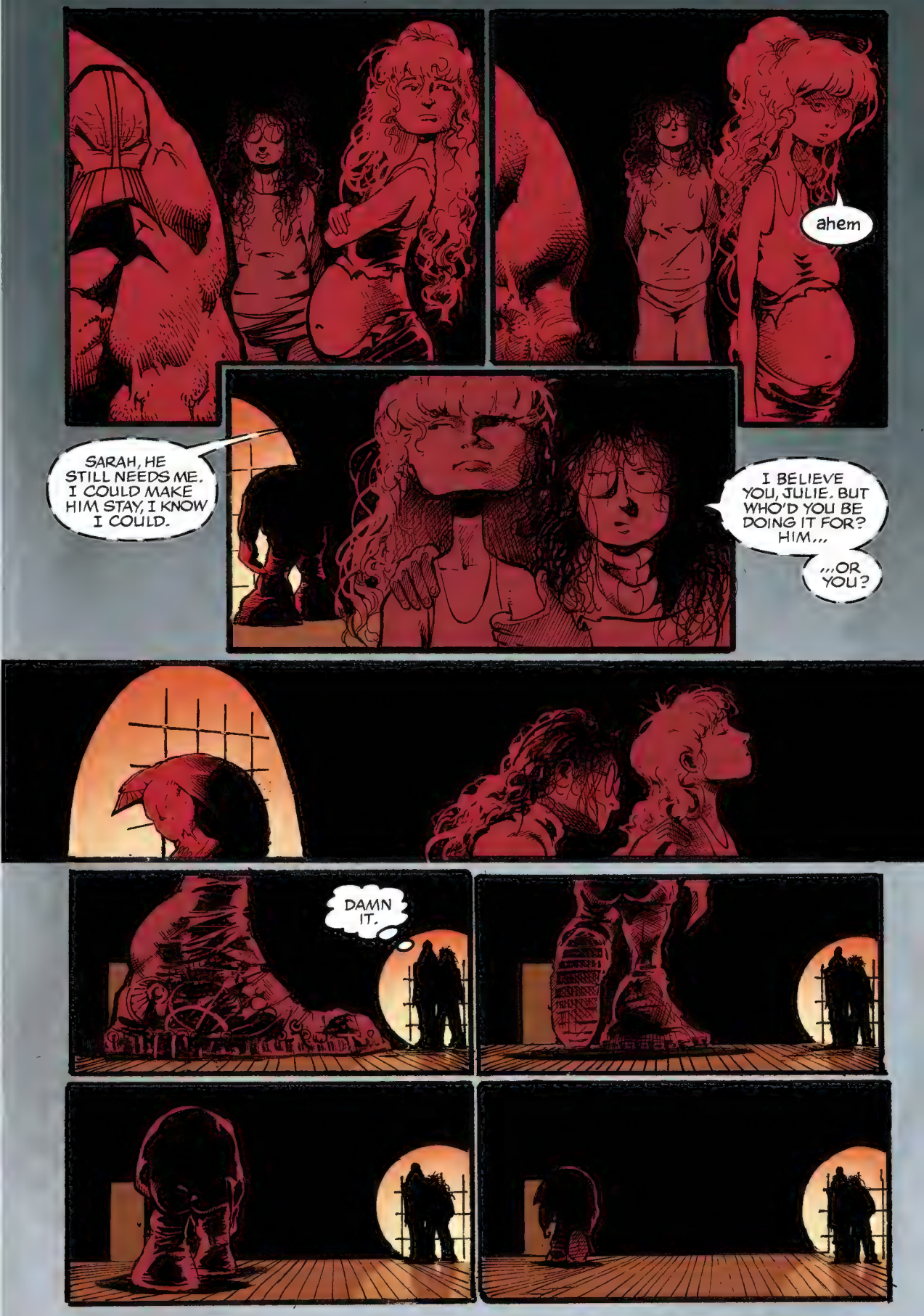
WITH *YOUR* LUCK, ACTUALLY, NO.

DO YOU SUPPOSE HE'S REALLY DEAD NOW?

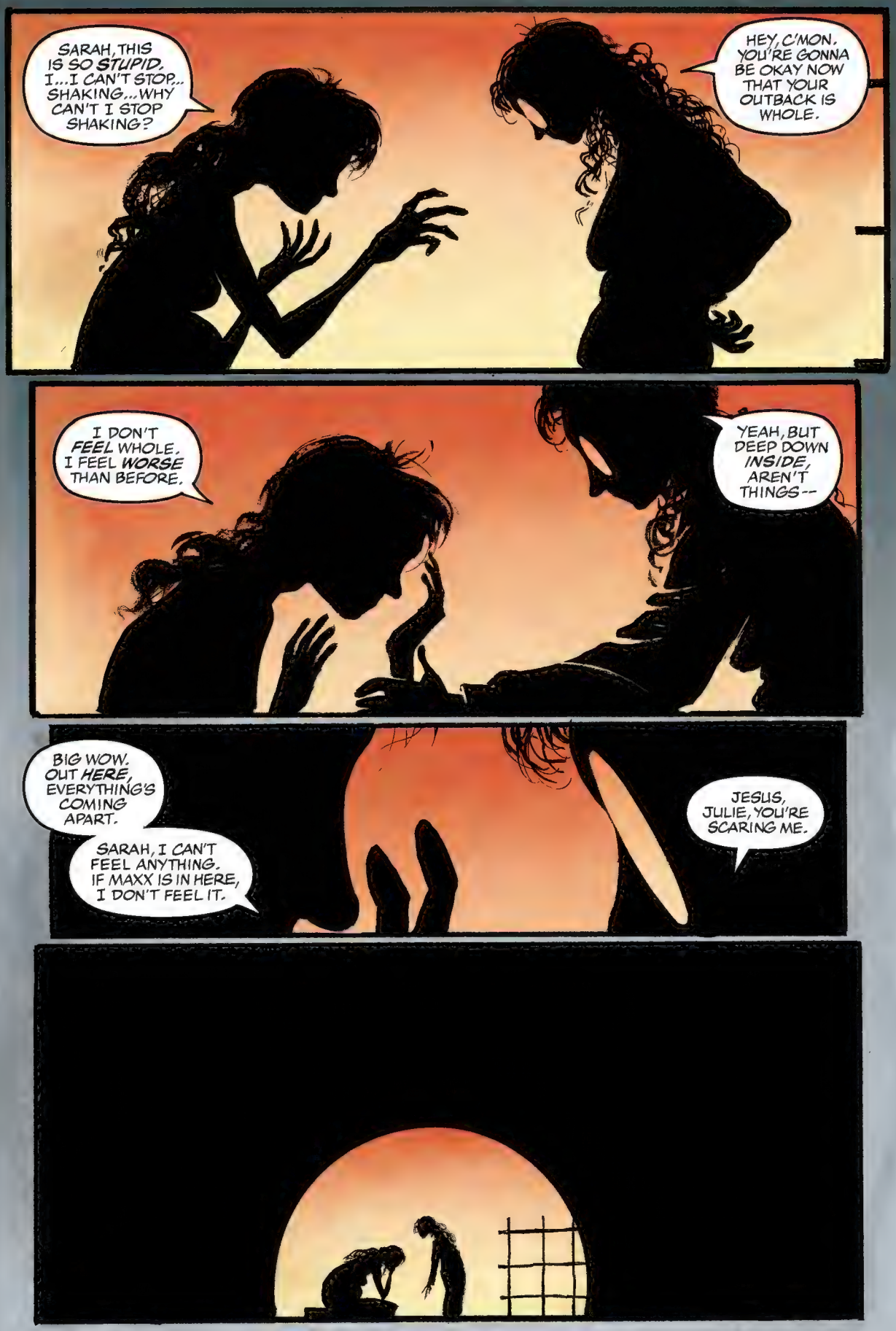
PROBABLY. AS FAR AS *I'M* CONCERNED, HE'S DEAD. THOUGH SOMEBODY WHO CAN SURVIVE AS TWO EYES AND BRAIN GOO, CLINGING TO A BATHROOM CEILING, IS PRETTY HARD TO *KILL!*

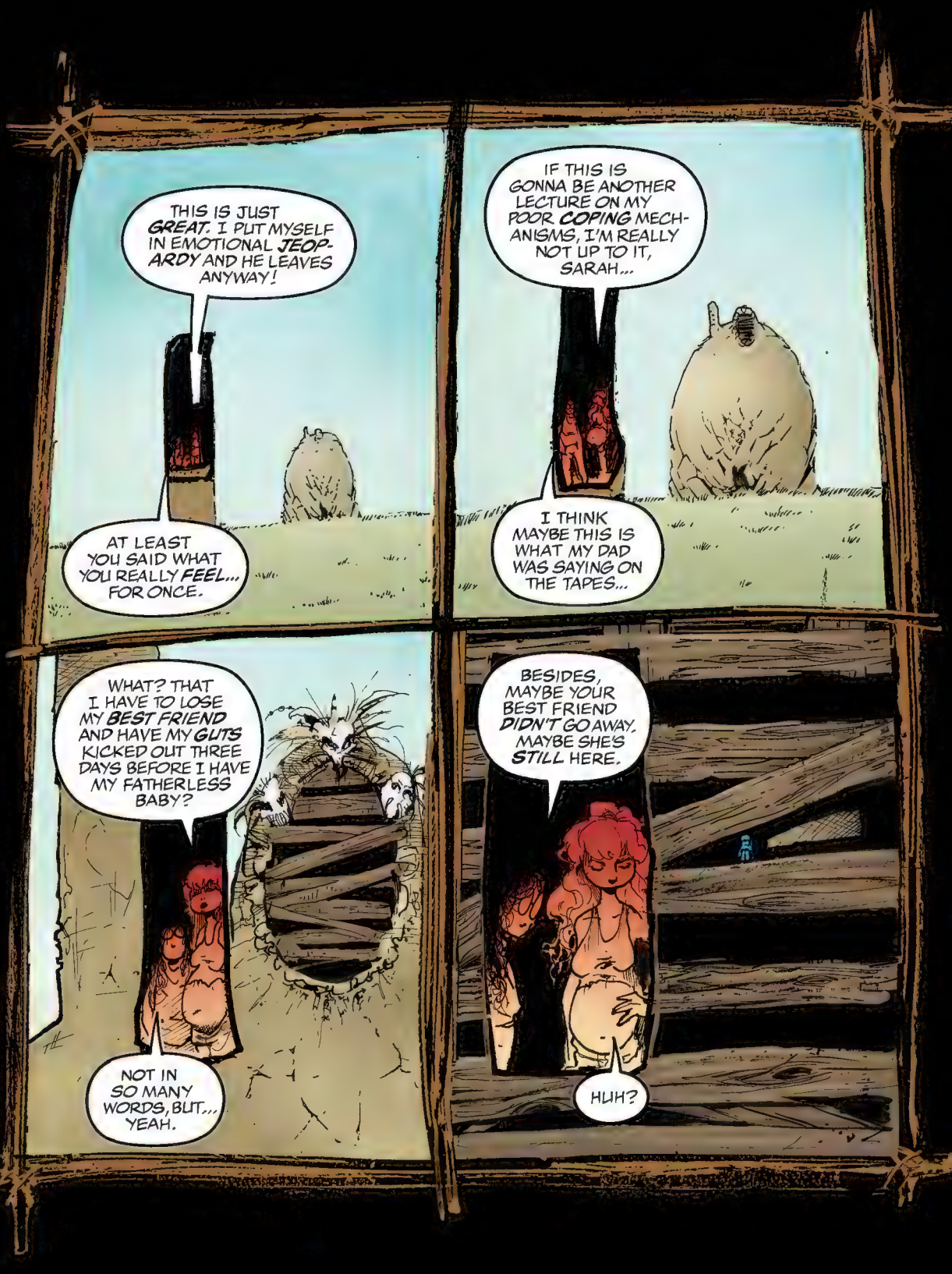
BUT I THINK HE'S STOPPED WALKING AROUND INSIDE OF MY HEAD, WHICH IS ALL I REALLY *CARE* ABOUT.

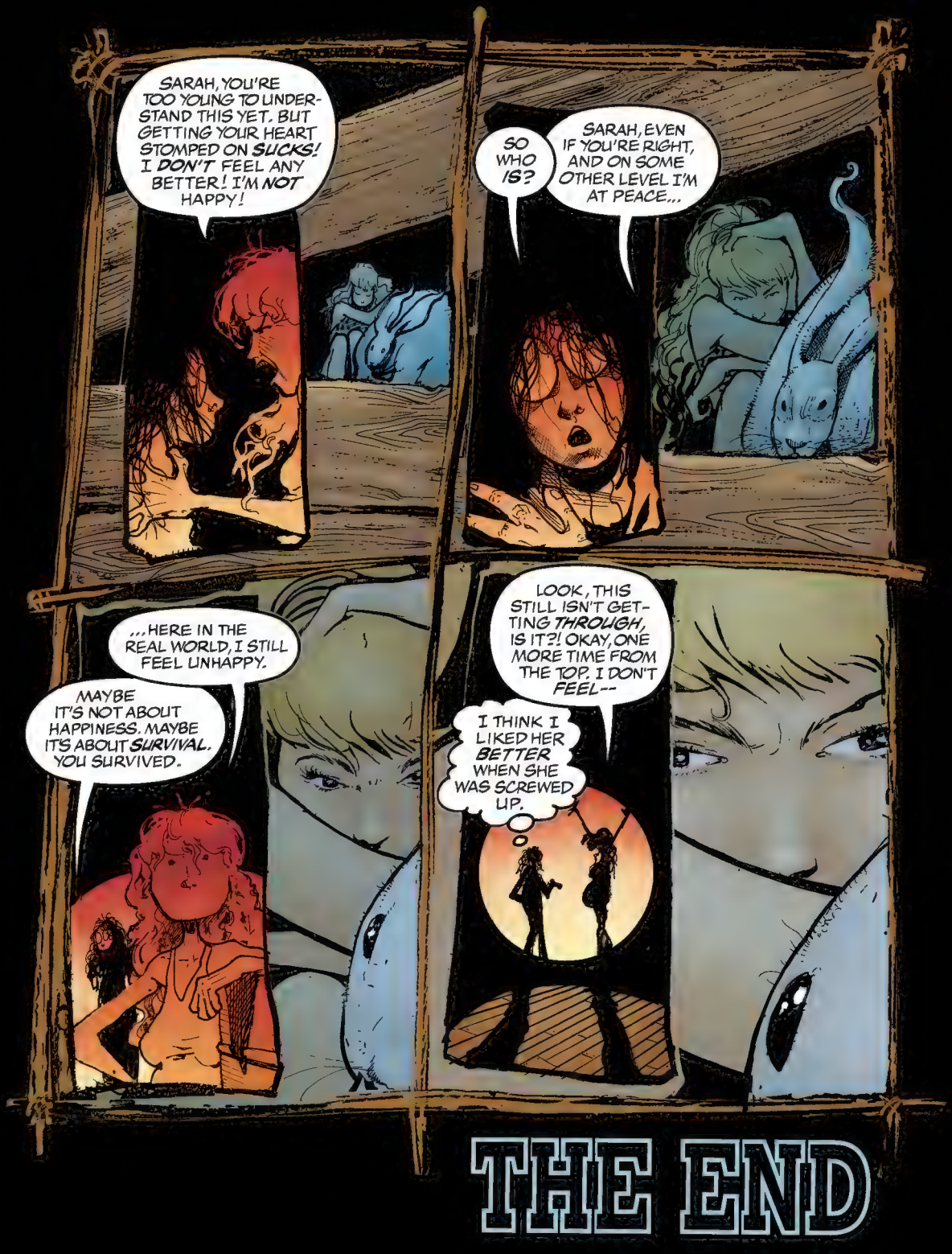

SO, EVERYTHING'S OKAY, THEN. I CAN LEAVE?
WHY ARE YOU ASKING ME?
I KNOW. IT'S JUST...
LOOK, MAXX...
I JUST DON'T KNOW IF THIS IS THE BEST THING FOR YOU RIGHT NOW.
RIGHT.
NO, I MEAN IT. LEAVING RIGHT NOW COULD BE DISASTROUS.
I CAN'T BELIEVE YOU'RE SABOTAGING HIM THIS WAY. YOU'RE SUPPOSED TO CARE.
COME ON GUYS, CHEER UP! EVEN THOUGH IT SEEMS LIKE EVERYBODY'S SUFFERING AND HURTING ON THE OUTSIDE...
...WHAT'S REALLY HAPPENING IS, DEEP INSIDE JULIE THERE'S A HEALTHY QUEEN, A HEALED OUTBACK, AND A BIG HAPPY BUNNY!


ahem
SARAH, HE STILL NEEDS ME. I COULD MAKE HIM STAY, I KNOW I COULD.
I BELIEVE YOU, JULIE. BUT WHO'D YOU BE DOING IT FOR? HIM...
...OR YOU?
DAMN IT.

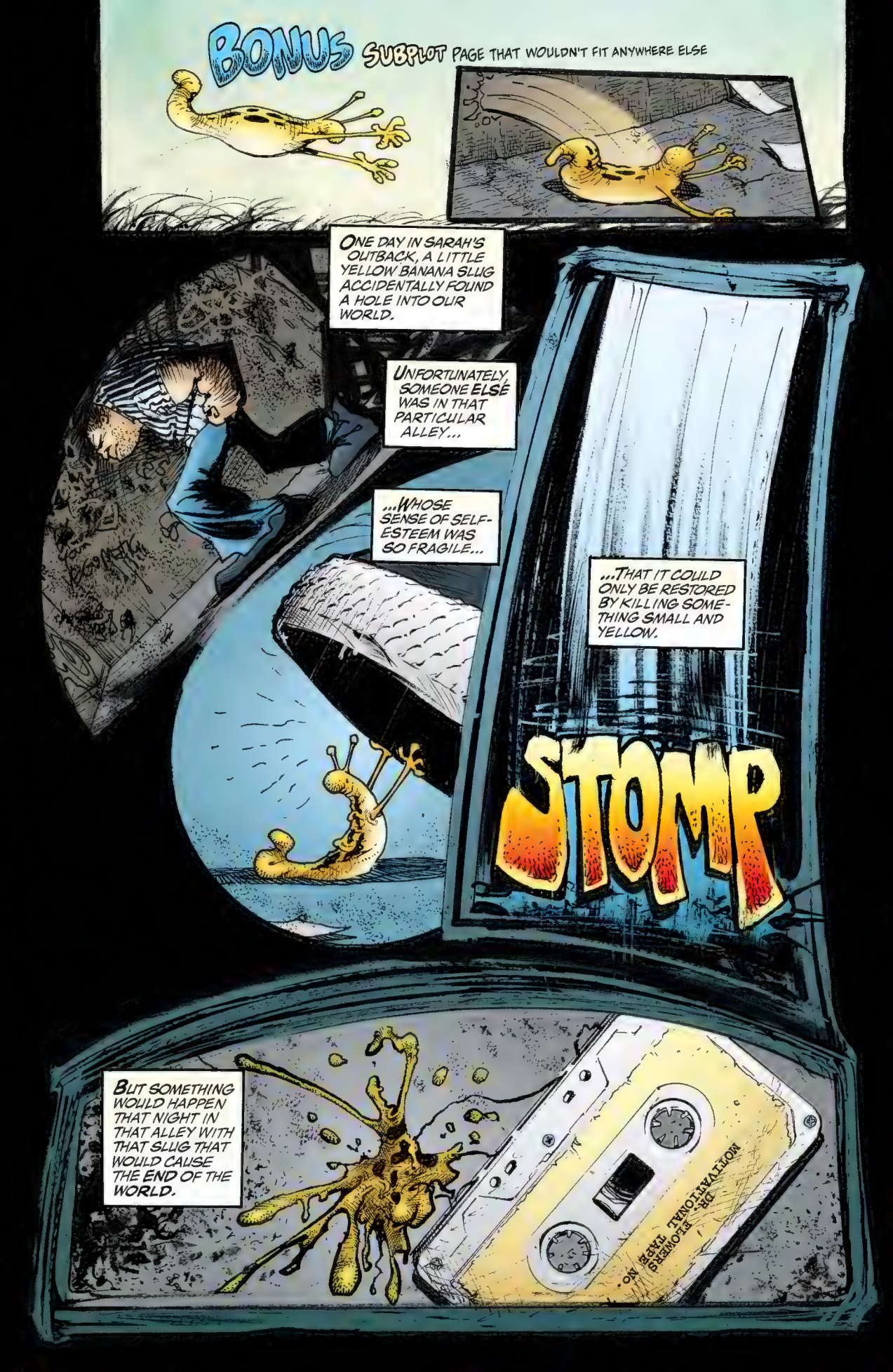
GOODBYE.
DON'T WORRY, JULIE. THE REAL MAXX WILL ALWAYS BE WITH YOU.
INSIDE... WHERE HE BELONGS.
CLICK

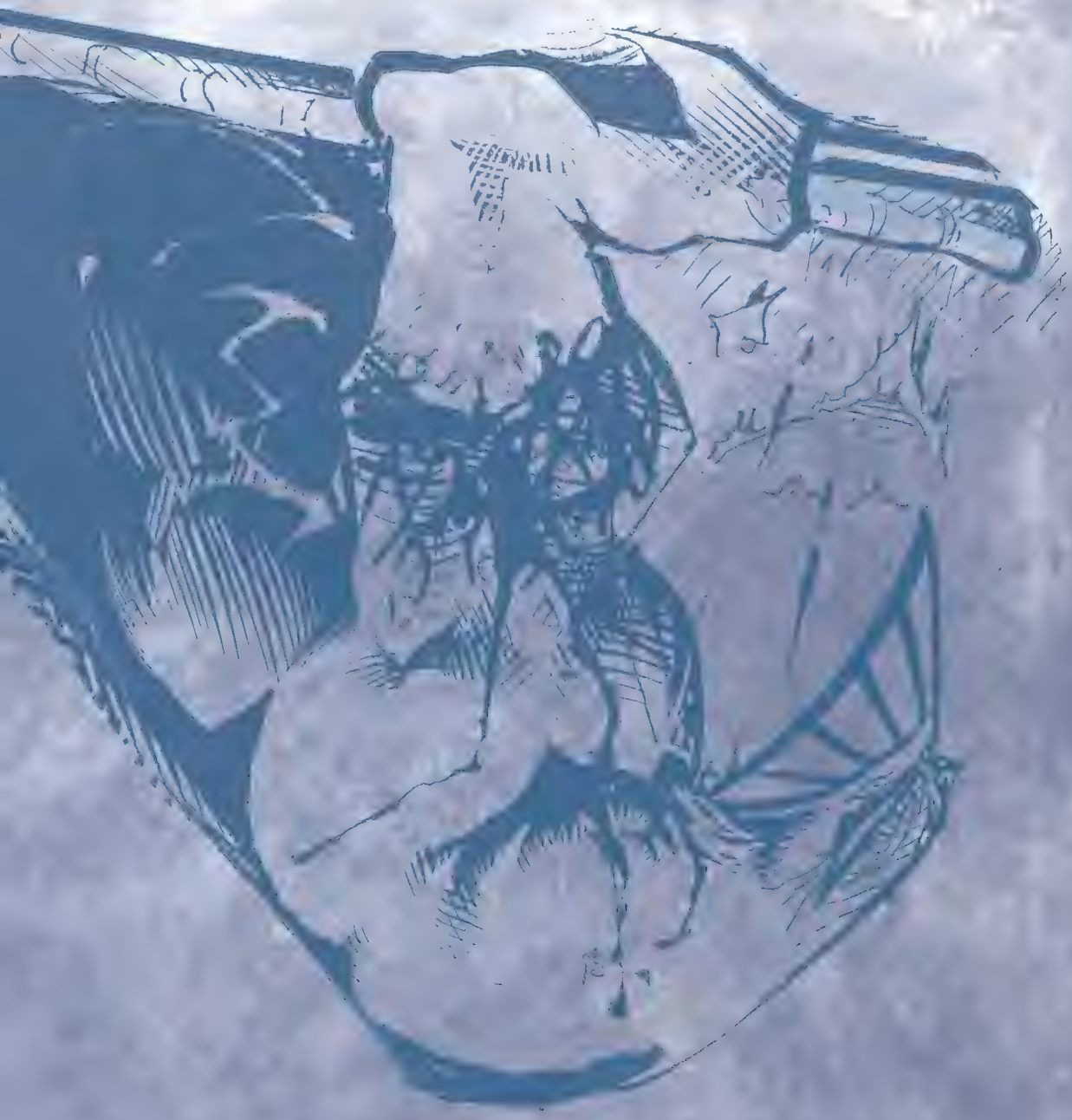

SARAH, THIS IS SO STUPID. I...I CAN'T STOP... SHAKING...WHY CAN'T I STOP SHAKING?
HEY, C'MON. YOU'RE GONNA BE OKAY NOW THAT YOUR OUTBACK IS WHOLE.
I DON'T FEEL WHOLE. I FEEL WORSE THAN BEFORE.
YEAH, BUT DEEP DOWN INSIDE, AREN'T THINGS--
BIG WOW. OUT HERE, EVERYTHING'S COMING APART.
SARAH, I CAN'T FEEL ANYTHING. IF MAXX IS IN HERE, I DON'T FEEL IT.
JESUS, JULIE, YOU'RE SCARING ME.


THIS IS JUST GREAT. I PUT MYSELF IN EMOTIONAL JEOPARDY AND HE LEAVES ANYWAY!
AT LEAST YOU SAID WHAT YOU REALLY FEEL... FOR ONCE.
IF THIS IS GONNA BE ANOTHER LECTURE ON MY POOR COPING MECHANISMS, I'M REALLY NOT UP TO IT, SARAH...
I THINK MAYBE THIS IS WHAT MY DAD WAS SAYING ON THE TAPES...
WHAT? THAT I HAVE TO LOSE MY BEST FRIEND AND HAVE MY GUTS KICKED OUT THREE DAYS BEFORE I HAVE MY FATHERLESS BABY?
NOT IN SO MANY WORDS, BUT... YEAH.
BESIDES, MAYBE YOUR BEST FRIEND DIDN'T GO AWAY. MAYBE SHE'S STILL HERE.
HUH?

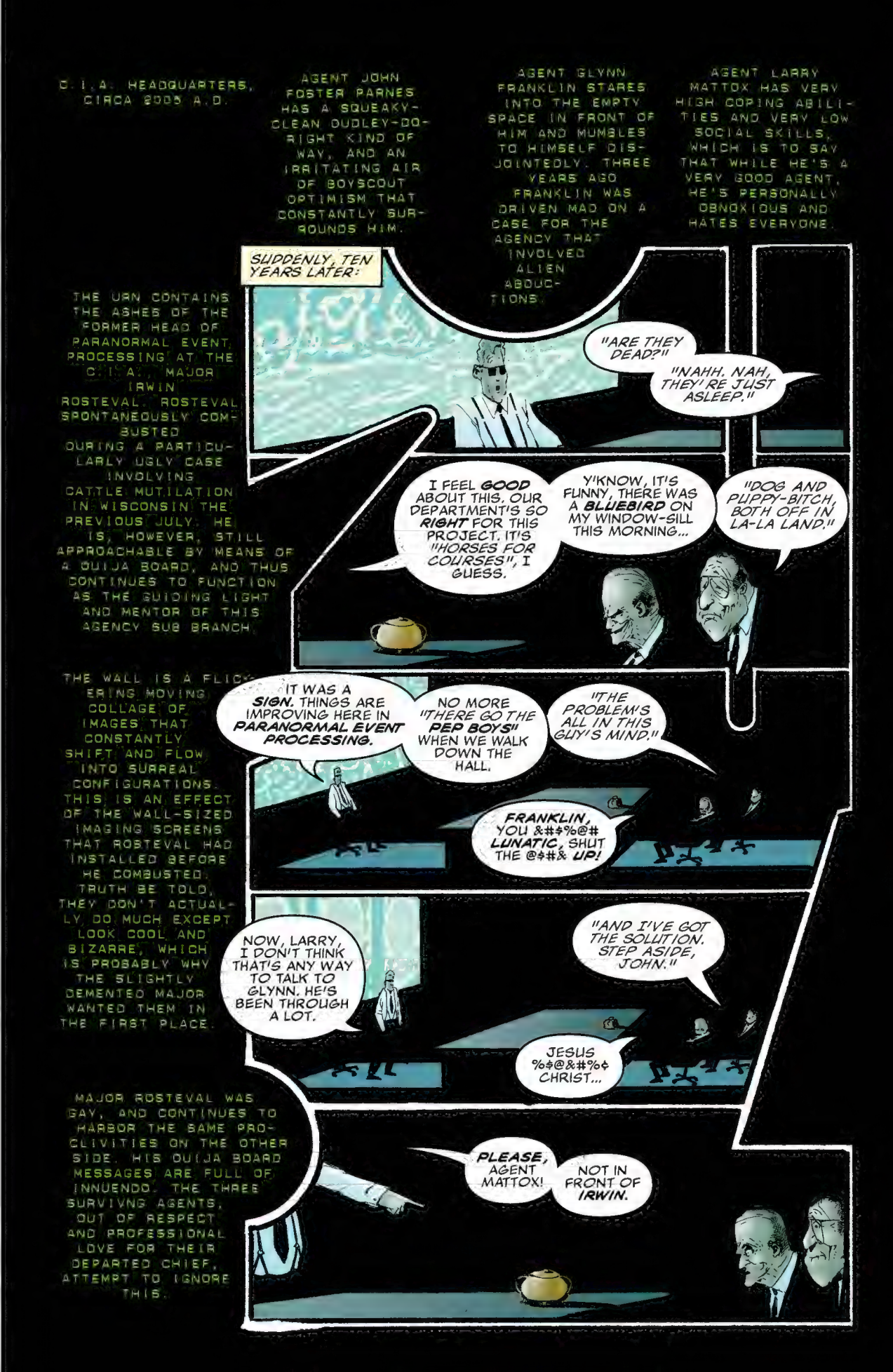

SARAH, YOU'RE TOO YOUNG TO UNDERSTAND THIS YET. BUT GETTING YOUR HEART STOMPED ON SUCKS! I DON'T FEEL ANY BETTER! I'M NOT HAPPY!
SO WHO IS?
SARAH, EVEN IF YOU'RE RIGHT, AND ON SOME OTHER LEVEL I'M AT PEACE...
...HERE IN THE REAL WORLD, I STILL FEEL UNHAPPY.
MAYBE IT'S NOT ABOUT HAPPINESS. MAYBE IT'S ABOUT SURVIVAL. YOU SURVIVED.
LOOK, THIS STILL ISN'T GETTING THROUGH, IS IT?! OKAY, ONE MORE TIME FROM THE TOP. I DON'T FEEL--
I THINK I LIKED HER BETTER WHEN SHE WAS SCREWED UP.

THE END

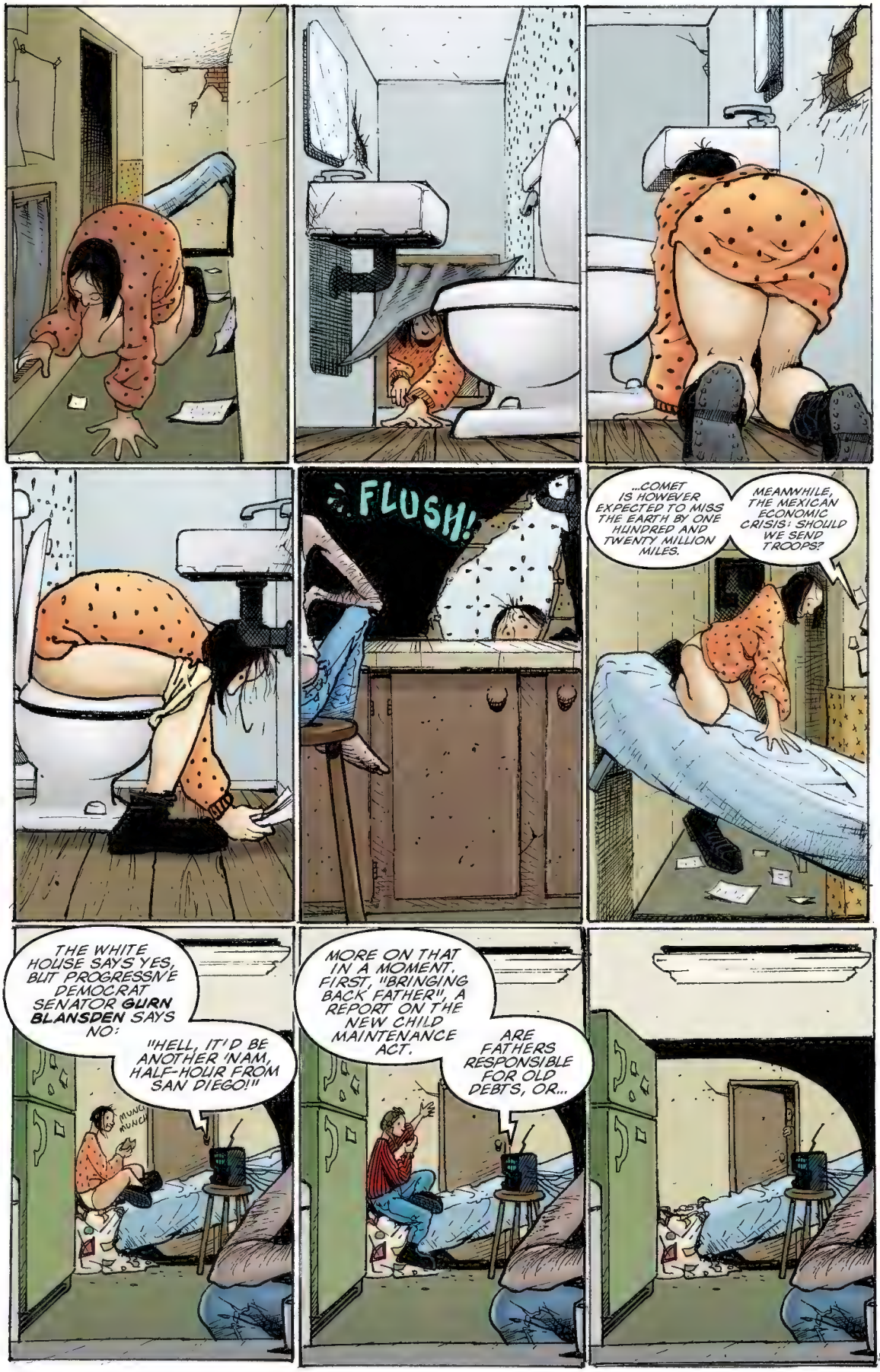

BONUS SUBPLOT PAGE THAT WOULDN'T FIT ANYWHERE ELSE
ONE DAY IN SARAH'S OUTBACK, A LITTLE YELLOW BANANA SLUG ACCIDENTALLY FOUND A HOLE INTO OUR WORLD.
UNFORTUNATELY, SOMEONE ELSE WAS IN THAT PARTICULAR ALLEY...
...WHOSE SENSE OF SELF-ESTEEM WAS SO FRAGILE...
...THAT IT COULD ONLY BE RESTORED BY KILLING SOMETHING SMALL AND YELLOW.
STOMP
BUT SOMETHING WOULD HAPPEN THAT NIGHT IN THAT ALLEY WITH THAT SLUG THAT WOULD CAUSE THE END OF THE WORLD.
DR. BLOWERS MOTIVATIONAL TAPE NO.



Chapter Three
THE MASK


C.I.A. HEADQUARTERS, CIRCA 2005 A.D.
AGENT JOHN FOSTER PARNES HAS A SQUEAKY-CLEAN DUDLEY-DO-RIGHT KIND OF WAY, AND AN IRRITATING AIR OF BOYSCOUT OPTIMISM THAT CONSTANTLY SURROUNDS HIM.
AGENT GLYNN FRANKLIN STARES INTO THE EMPTY SPACE IN FRONT OF HIM AND MUMBLES TO HIMSELF DISJOINTEDLY. THREE YEARS AGO FRANKLIN WAS DRIVEN MAD ON A CASE FOR THE AGENCY THAT INVOLVED ALIEN ABDUCTIONS.
AGENT LARRY MATTOX HAS VERY HIGH COPING ABILITIES AND VERY LOW SOCIAL SKILLS, WHICH IS TO SAY THAT WHILE HE'S A VERY GOOD AGENT, HE'S PERSONALLY OBNOXIOUS AND HATES EVERYONE.
SUDDENLY, TEN YEARS LATER:
"ARE THEY DEAD?"
"NAHH. NAH, THEY'RE JUST ASLEEP."
THE URN CONTAINS THE ASHES OF THE FORMER HEAD OF PARANORMAL EVENT PROCESSING AT THE C.I.A., MAJOR IRWIN ROSTEVAL. ROSTEVAL SPONTANEOUSLY COMBUSTED DURING A PARTICULARLY UGLY CASE INVOLVING CATTLE MUTILATION IN WISCONSIN THE PREVIOUS JULY. HE IS, HOWEVER, STILL APPROACHABLE BY MEANS OF A OUIJA BOARD, AND THUS CONTINUES TO FUNCTION AS THE GUIDING LIGHT AND MENTOR OF THIS AGENCY SUB BRANCH.
I FEEL GOOD ABOUT THIS. OUR DEPARTMENT'S SO RIGHT FOR THIS PROJECT. IT'S "HORSES FOR COURSES", I GUESS.
Y'KNOW, IT'S FUNNY, THERE WAS A BLUEBIRD ON MY WINDOW-SILL THIS MORNING...
"DOG AND PUPPY-BITCH, BOTH OFF IN LA-LA LAND."
THE WALL IS A FLICKERING MOVING COLLAGE OF IMAGES THAT CONSTANTLY SHIFT AND FLOW INTO SURREAL CONFIGURATIONS. THIS IS AN EFFECT OF THE WALL-SIZED IMAGING SCREENS THAT ROSTEVAL HAD INSTALLED BEFORE HE COMBUSTED. TRUTH BE TOLD, THEY DON'T ACTUALLY DO MUCH EXCEPT LOOK COOL AND BIZARRE, WHICH IS PROBABLY WHY THE SLIGHTLY DEMENTED MAJOR WANTED THEM IN THE FIRST PLACE.
IT WAS A SIGN. THINGS ARE IMPROVING HERE IN PARANORMAL EVENT PROCESSING.
NO MORE "THERE GO THE PEP BOYS" WHEN WE WALK DOWN THE HALL.
"THE PROBLEM'S ALL IN THIS GUY'S MIND."
FRANKLIN, YOU &##$%@# LUNATIC, SHUT THE @$#& UP!
NOW, LARRY, I DON'T THINK THAT'S ANY WAY TO TALK TO GLYNN. HE'S BEEN THROUGH A LOT.
"AND I'VE GOT THE SOLUTION. STEP ASIDE, JOHN."
JESUS %$@&#%¢ CHRIST...
MAJOR ROSTEVAL WAS GAY, AND CONTINUES TO HARBOR THE SAME PROCLIVITIES ON THE OTHER SIDE. HIS OUIJA BOARD MESSAGES ARE FULL OF INNUENDO. THE THREE SURVIVNG AGENTS, OUT OF RESPECT AND PROFESSIONAL LOVE FOR THEIR DEPARTED CHIEF, ATTEMPT TO IGNORE THIS.
PLEASE, AGENT MATTOX!
NOT IN FRONT OF IRWIN.

STEVE
STEVE'S GLASS OF WATER
...LOWENCORP CEO SKIT BICKERS IS IN THE SPOTLIGHT AGAIN.
STEVE'S BEDROOM
BATHROOM
KITCHEN
SARA'S BEDROOM
SARA (FORMERLY SARAH)
EIGHT YEARS AGO, BICKERS FOUND HIMSELF ON THE CONGRESSIONAL HOT SEAT FOR INTRODUCING THE TOBACCO ADDITIVE NICOTINE INTO THE PRODUCTS OF LOWENCORP SUBSIDIARY NABIXTO FOODS.
BATHROOM FLAP
MURPHY BED
AFTER INVESTIGATION BY THE FDA FOR OVER SEVEN YEARS, BICKERS WAS FINALLY ACQUITTED OF ALL ILLEGAL ACTIVITY WHEN THE INVESTIGATING COMMITTEE FAILED TO REACH ANY CONCLUSIONS WHATSOEVER...
...AND THE ONCE-CONTROVERSIAL USE OF NICOTINE IS NOW COMMONPLACE.


FLUSH!
...COMET IS HOWEVER EXPECTED TO MISS THE EARTH BY ONE HUNDRED AND TWENTY MILLION MILES.
MEANWHILE, THE MEXICAN ECONOMIC CRISIS: SHOULD WE SEND TROOPS?
THE WHITE HOUSE SAYS YES, BUT PROGRESSIVE DEMOCRAT SENATOR GURN BLANSDEN SAYS NO:
"HELL, IT'D BE ANOTHER 'NAM, HALF-HOUR FROM SAN DIEGO!!"
MUNCH MUNCH
MORE ON THAT IN A MOMENT. FIRST, "BRINGING BACK FATHER", A REPORT ON THE NEW CHILD MAINTENANCE ACT.
ARE FATHERS RESPONSIBLE FOR OLD DEBTS, OR...

SARA!
HEY, SARA!
SARA, WE HAVE TO TALK...
NORBERT, I DON'T KNOW YOU. GO NAG SOMEBODY ELSE.
WELFAR
OFFICE

LOOK, I JUST WANT MY CHECK, OKAY?
THAT'S NOT POSSIBLE. THE NEW CHILD MAINTENANCE ACT MAKES YOUR FATHER RESPONSIBLE FOR YOUR UPKEEP, RATHER THAN THE STATE.
ARE YOU KIDDING? I'M TWENTY-FIVE YEARS OLD!
MAYBE SO, BUT THE LAW'S RETROACTIVE. FOR SEVERAL YEARS YOUR FATHER WAS RESPONSIBLE BUT LET THE STATE SUPPORT YOU. IT'S LIKE BACK TAXES.
WAIT A MINUTE--ME, GET MONEY OFF MY FATHER? ME AND MOM DIDN'T EVEN WANT CONTACT WITH MY FATHER...
THAT'S TOO BAD, HONEY, BECAUSE HE'S WHERE YOU GET YOUR HANDOUTS FROM NOW ON.
NEXT, PLEASE.
I DON'T #@&%$¢ BELIEVE THIS!
I NEED EIGHT DOLLARS FOR A QUART OF FOOD.

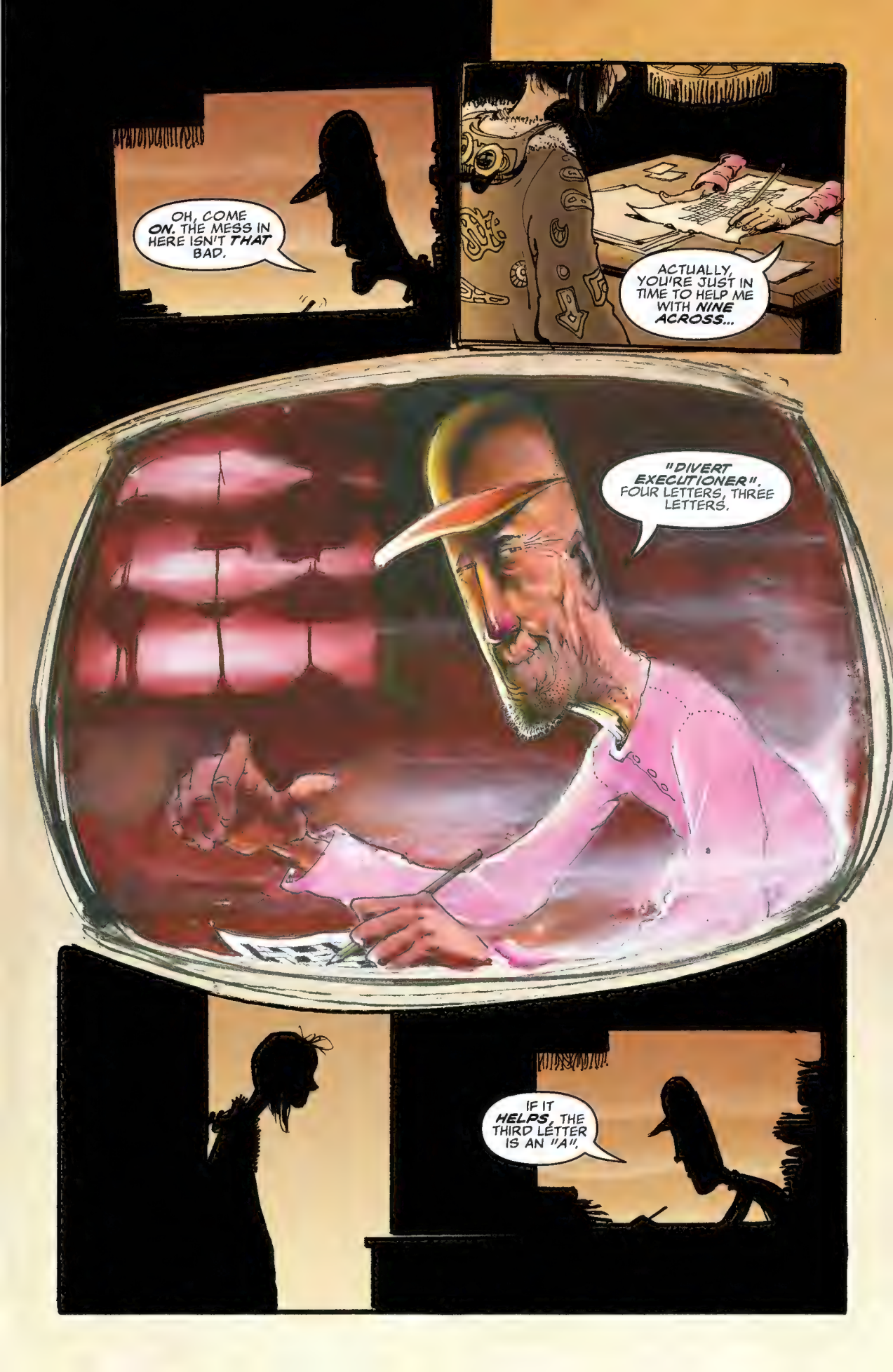
GOSH.
YOU'RE ABSOLUTELY SURE IT WAS THE PENDER GIRL?
WHAT, YOU WANT ME TO TAKE A SMEAR TEST OR SOMETHIN'? OF COURSE I'M #$%@&$ SURE!
WE FIGURED THESE NEW CHILD MAINTENANCE LAWS MIGHT UNEARTH HIM, AND WE WERE RIGHT.
TOP-NOTCH TRACKING, LARRY! IF IRWIN WERE HERE, HE'D GIVE YOU SUCH A HUG.
YEAH. I KNOW.
ANYWAY, I FIGURE ON JUST FOLLOWIN' HER WHILE SHE DOES ALL THE TRACKIN', UNLESS ANYBODY'S GOT ANYTHIN' ELSE TO ADD.
THAT'S A VERY NICE DRAWING, LARRY. I CALL IT "WHEN DID YOU LAST SEE YOUR FATHER?"
WHAT THE #&%$--
THANK YOU, GLYNN. THAT WAS A VERY SPECIAL MOMENT, BUT RIGHT NOW WE HAVE A MISSION, OLD BUDDY.
OH, RIGHT! LIKE HE REMEMBERS WHAT THAT IS! LOOK, LET'S JUST GO GET IN THE $%$&#%@ CAR, OKAY?
LAST ONE OUT, SWITCH OFF THE WALLS.

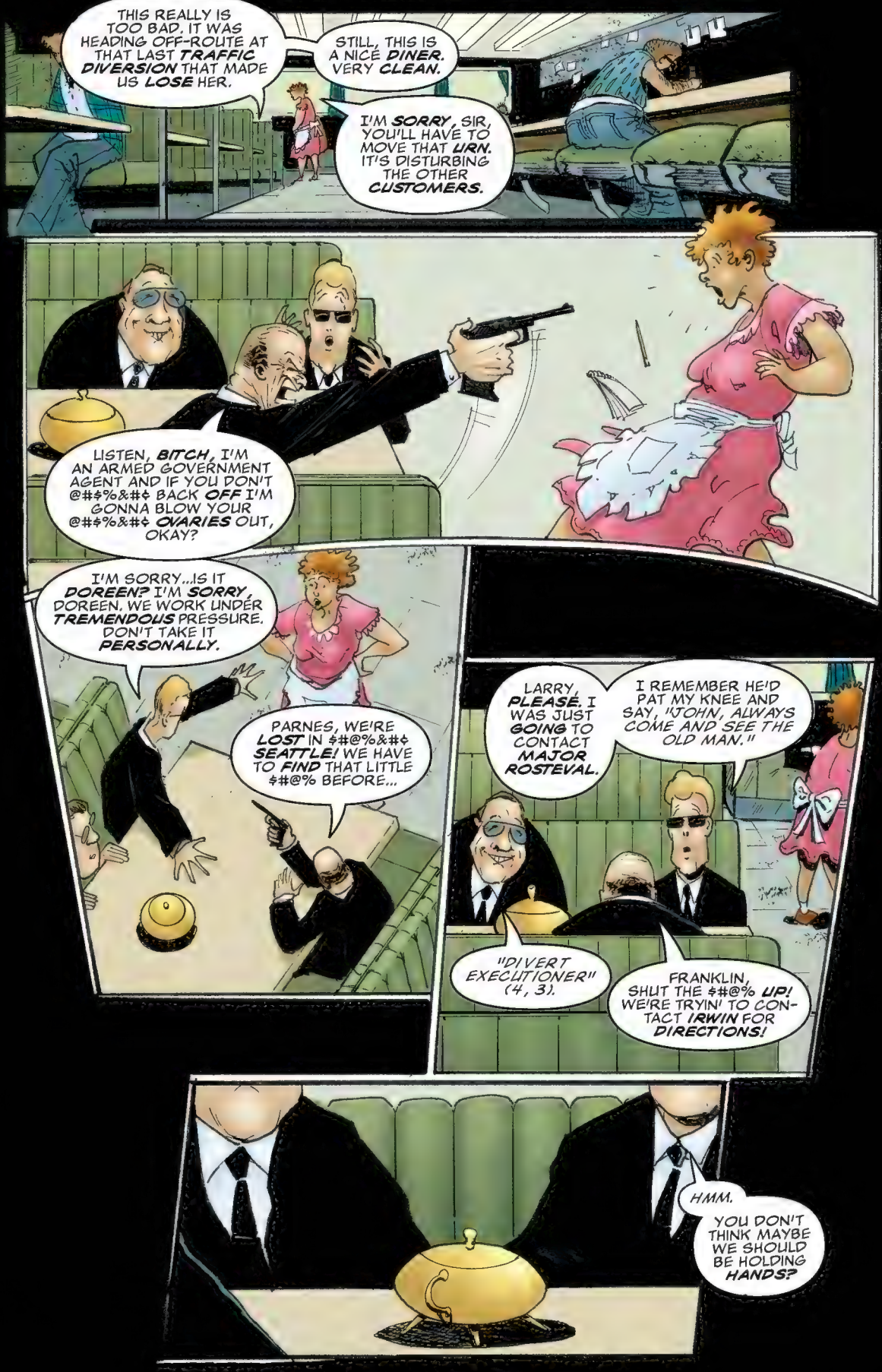
MEMORIAL HOSPITAL
SO, ARE YOU DATING?
MOM, GET REAL. THE ONLY GUY WHO PAYS ME ANY ATTENTION IS THIS WINO I CALL NORBERT THE NAG.
IS HE HANDSOME?
MOM, HE'S A WINO. I DON'T MAKE EYE CONTACT. LISTEN, I HAVE TO FIND DAD...
YEAH, YOU SAID. THIS WELFARE THING.
WELL, THE LAST ADDRESS I HEARD WAS THE LOOSE END TRAILER PARK IN SEATTLE.
IF YOU FIND HIM, ASK HIM IF HE STILL HAS MY COCKNEY REBEL TAPE.

SARA, WAIT! WE REALLY GOTTA TALK!
SARA, HEY...
HAY IS FOR HORSES, NORBERT. DROP DEAD.
...MY BOY DUANE, HE'S IN THE ARMY. ONE O'THEM HOMOSEXUAL REGIMENTS, AIN'T THAT CUTE?
HE SAYS WE OUGHTA BE READY T'GIVE THEM TACO-TOSSERS HELL!
I GOT A PICTURE HERE...

SEATTL
BUS DEPOT
LOOSE END
TRAILER PAR

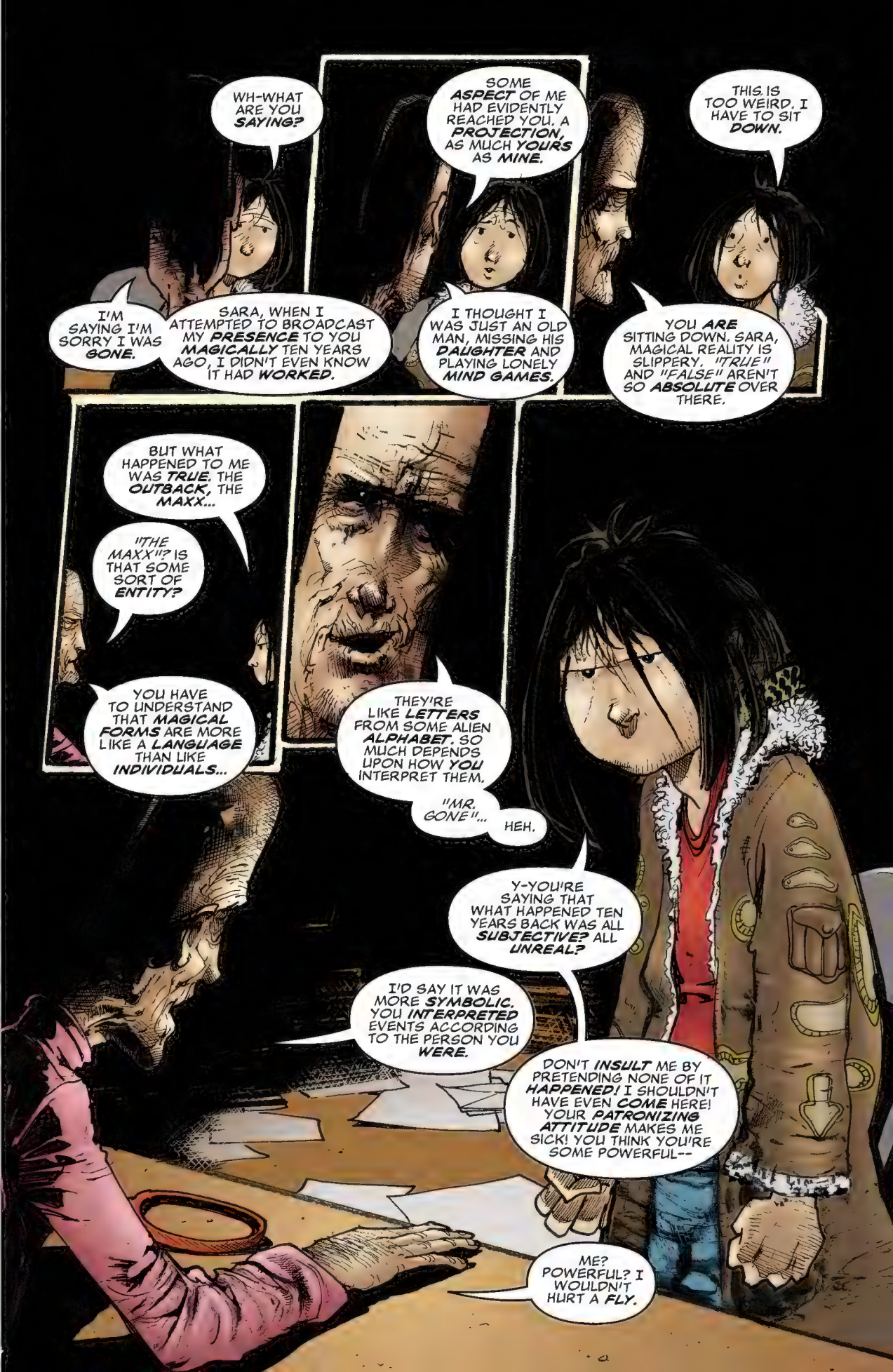
WHAT *IS* ALL THIS CRAP...?


OH, COME ON. THE MESS IN HERE ISN'T THAT BAD.
ACTUALLY, YOU'RE JUST IN TIME TO HELP ME WITH NINE ACROSS...
"DIVERT EXECUTIONER". FOUR LETTERS, THREE LETTERS.
IF IT HELPS, THE THIRD LETTER IS AN "A".

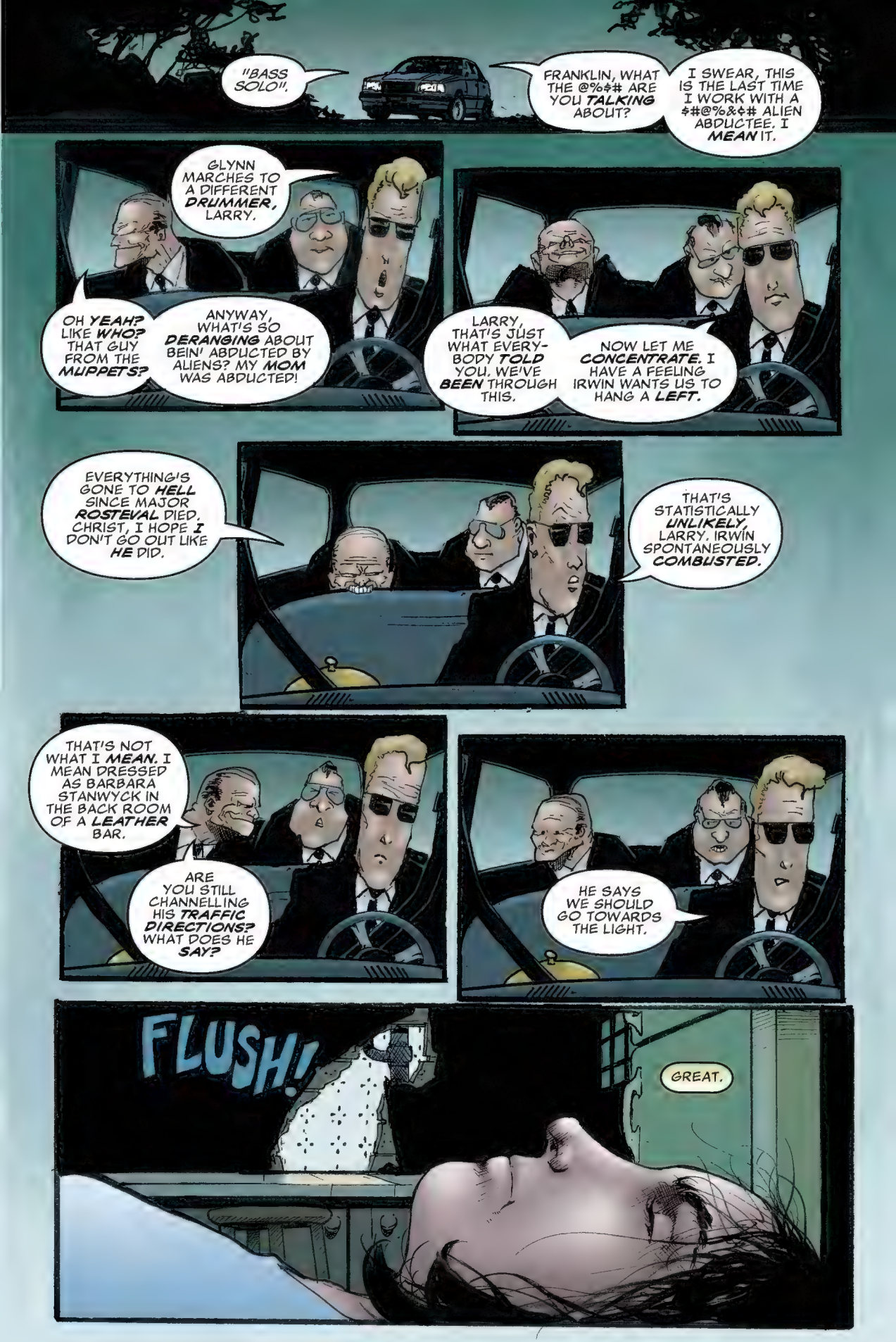

THIS REALLY IS TOO BAD. IT WAS HEADING OFF-ROUTE AT THAT LAST TRAFFIC DIVERSION THAT MADE US LOSE HER.
STILL, THIS IS A NICE DINER. VERY CLEAN.
I'M SORRY, SIR, YOU'LL HAVE TO MOVE THAT URN. IT'S DISTURBING THE OTHER CUSTOMERS.
LISTEN, BITCH, I'M AN ARMED GOVERNMENT AGENT AND IF YOU DON'T @#$%&#¢ BACK OFF I'M GONNA BLOW YOUR @#$%&#¢ OVARIES OUT, OKAY?
I'M SORRY...IS IT DOREEN? I'M SORRY, DOREEN. WE WORK UNDER TREMENDOUS PRESSURE. DON'T TAKE IT PERSONALLY.
PARNES, WE'RE LOST IN $#@%&#¢ SEATTLE! WE HAVE TO FIND THAT LITTLE $#@% BEFORE...
LARRY, PLEASE. I WAS JUST GOING TO CONTACT MAJOR ROSTEVAL.
I REMEMBER HE'D PAT MY KNEE AND SAY, "JOHN, ALWAYS COME AND SEE THE OLD MAN."
"DIVERT EXECUTIONER" (4, 3).
FRANKLIN, SHUT THE $#@% UP! WE'RE TRYIN' TO CONTACT IRWIN FOR DIRECTIONS!
HMM.
YOU DON'T THINK MAYBE WE SHOULD BE HOLDING HANDS?

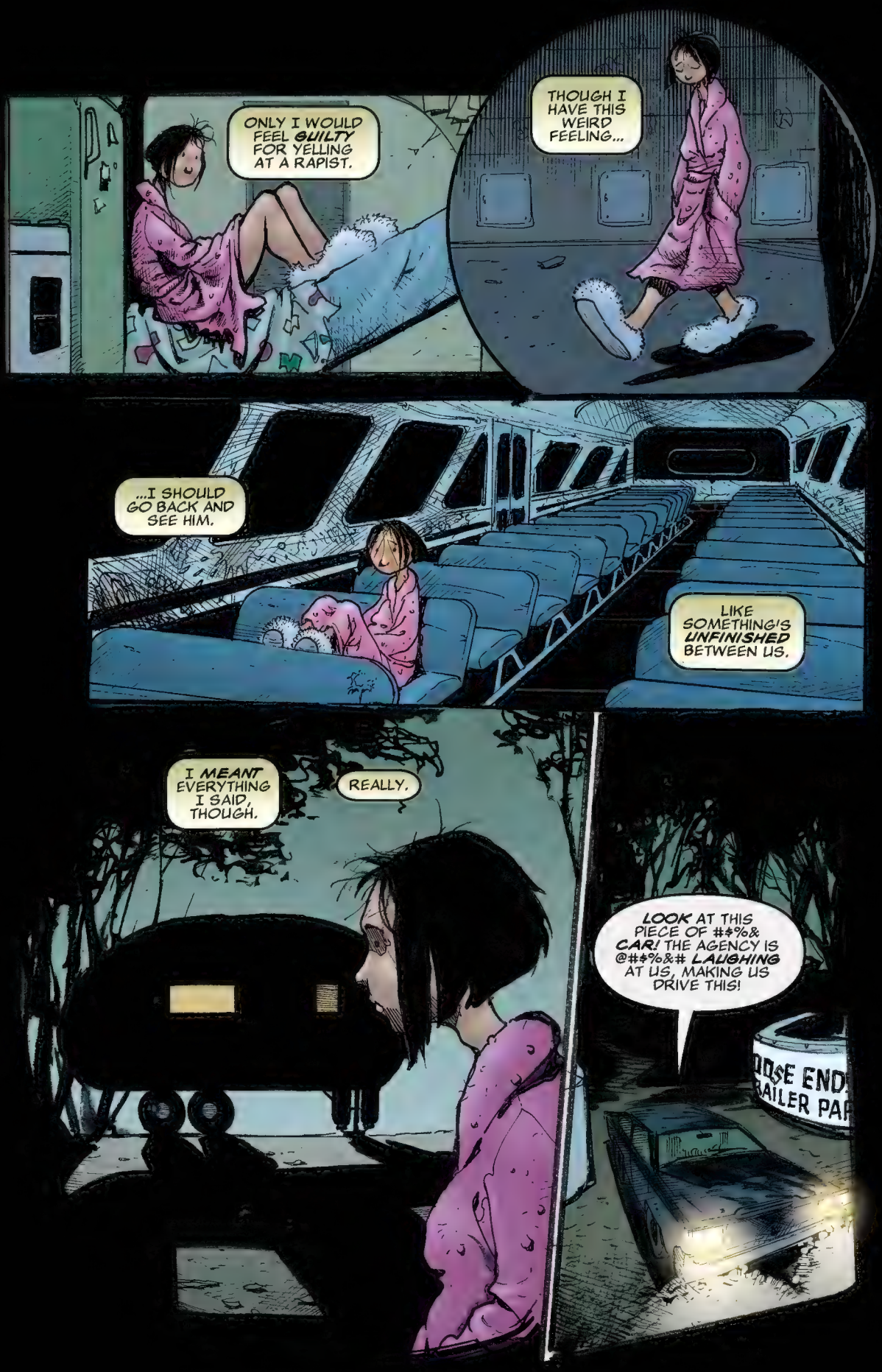
SO, THEY WANT ME TO PAY YOUR WELFARE.
FRANKLY, HONEY, I'M NOT SURE I CAN...
DON'T "HONEY" ME. I FEEL TAINTED JUST BEING HERE, AFTER WHAT YOU DID...
WHAT I DID?
YEAH, YOU! TEN YEARS BACK, REMEMBER? MR. GONE, THE MAGIC RAPIST SERIAL KILLER: HE GETS DECAPITATED BUT HE KEEPS COMING BACK!
YOU SON OF A BITCH. YOU...
HELL-OH-EE? I THOUGHT I HEARD VOICES IN HERE!
THIS MUST BE THAT DAUGHTER YOU'RE ALWAYS MOONING OVER.
UH, YEAH. SARA, THIS IS GAYNOR.
HI, SWEETHEART. DON'T LISTEN TO A THING HE TELLS YA ABOUT ME. ARTIE, I'M GOING TO THE STORE. YOU NEED ANYTHING?
UH, YEAH. YEAH, GET ME A PACK OF TWINKIES...ARE THOSE LOW TAR? AW, BETTER MAKE IT HO-HO'S.
SURE THING. SEE YA LATER.
MY DOCTOR SAYS HO-HO'S.

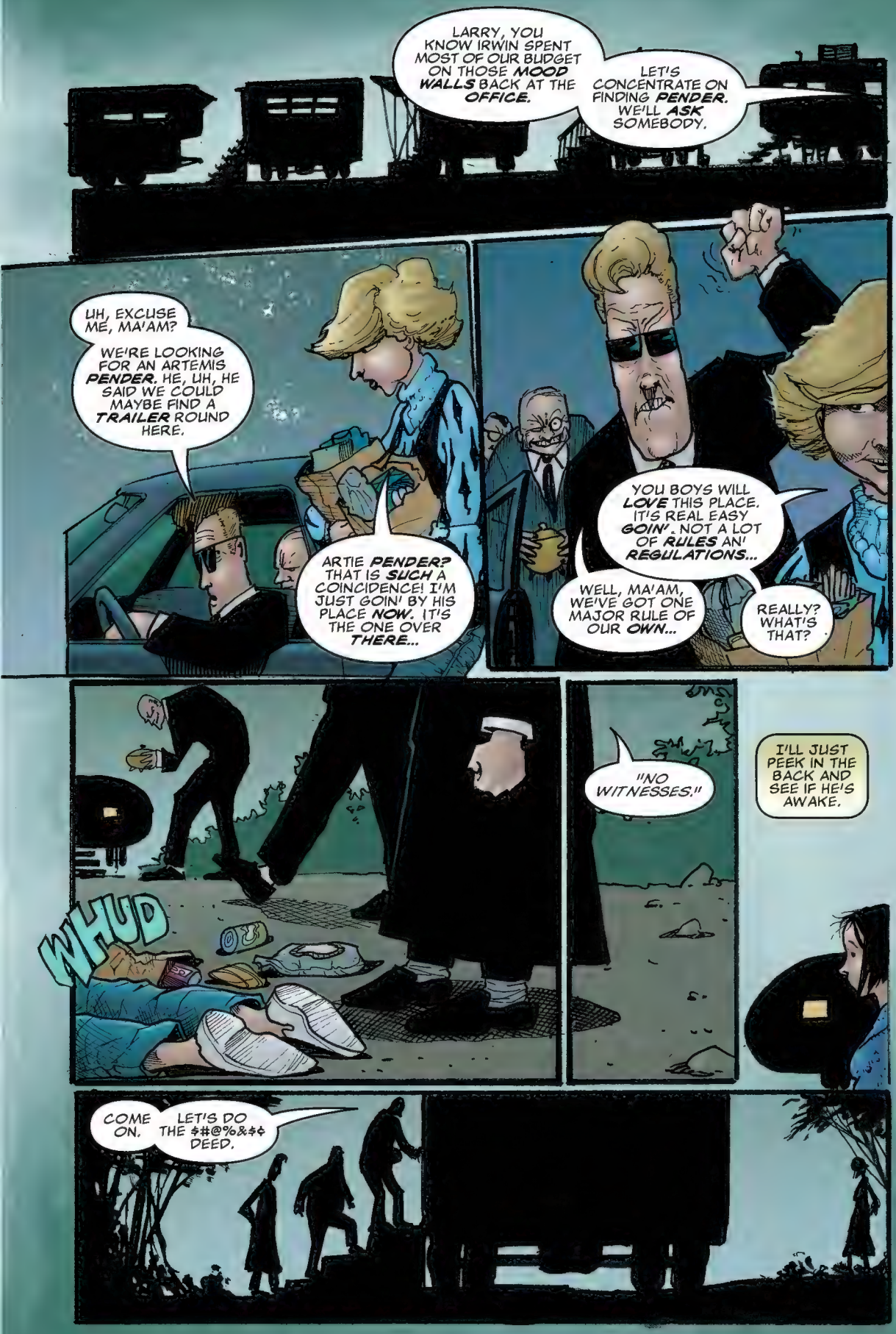
WHO WAS *THAT?*
GAYNOR? WELL, I GUESS SHE'S MY *GIRLFRIEND*. YOU SHOULD SEE THE PICTURES OF HER TWENTY YEARS AGO.
Y'KNOW, SHE WAS MARRIED TO THE MOB BOSS, "EGGSHELLS" GARETTY?
I DON'T WANT TO *LISTEN* TO YOUR BULL$#!%. LIKE FOR INSTANCE, WHAT'S THAT *"A. PENDER"* GARBAGE ON THE *DOOR?*
HUH? IT'S MY *NAME.* ARTIE *PENDER.*
SARA, WE'VE GOTTA *TALK* ABOUT THIS *RAPIST SERIAL KILLER* THING...
WHAT'S TO *TALK* ABOUT? YOU *TERRORIZED* US, AND YOU *KNOW* IT!
YOU RAMPAGED THROUGH EVERYBODY'S *OUTBACK,* A GLOATING *MONSTER* WITH A DETACHABLE *HEAD!*
TH-THAT'S *REALLY* HOW YOU *PERCEIVED* ME? JESUS...
LISTEN, YOU HAVE TO UNDERSTAND, HOW I APPEAR IN *YOUR* MAGICAL REALITY HAS AS MUCH TO DO YOUR *PERCEPTIONS* AS IT DOES WITH *ME.*
AND THAT *NAME* YOU GAVE ME...
"MR. GONE"!?
THAT WASN'T A NAME I *GAVE* YOU. THAT'S WHO YOU *WERE!*
NO. THAT'S WHAT I WAS TO *YOU.*
"MR. GONE". OF COURSE.
BABY, I'M SO VERY SORRY.

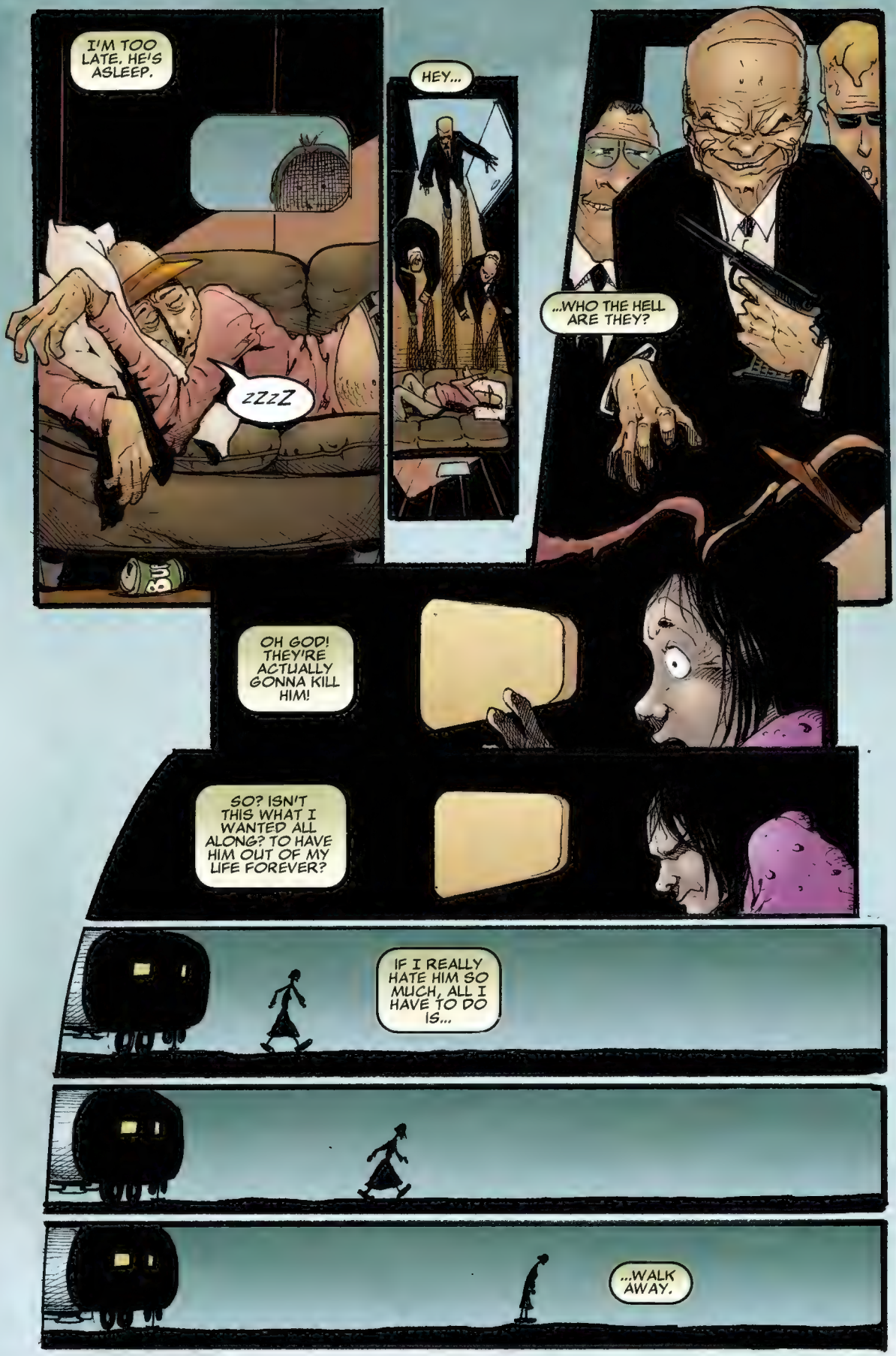

WH-WHAT ARE YOU SAYING?
I'M SAYING I'M SORRY I WAS GONE.
SARA, WHEN I ATTEMPTED TO BROADCAST MY PRESENCE TO YOU MAGICALLY TEN YEARS AGO, I DIDN'T EVEN KNOW IT HAD WORKED.
SOME ASPECT OF ME HAD EVIDENTLY REACHED YOU. A PROJECTION, AS MUCH YOURS AS MINE.
I THOUGHT I WAS JUST AN OLD MAN, MISSING HIS DAUGHTER AND PLAYING LONELY MIND GAMES.
THIS IS TOO WEIRD. I HAVE TO SIT DOWN.
YOU ARE SITTING DOWN. SARA, MAGICAL REALITY IS SLIPPERY. "TRUE" AND "FALSE" AREN'T SO ABSOLUTE OVER THERE.
BUT WHAT HAPPENED TO ME WAS TRUE. THE OUTBACK, THE MAXX...
"THE MAXX"? IS THAT SOME SORT OF ENTITY?
YOU HAVE TO UNDERSTAND THAT MAGICAL FORMS ARE MORE LIKE A LANGUAGE THAN LIKE INDIVIDUALS...
THEY'RE LIKE LETTERS FROM SOME ALIEN ALPHABET. SO MUCH DEPENDS UPON HOW YOU INTERPRET THEM.
"MR. GONE"...
HEH.
Y-YOU'RE SAYING THAT WHAT HAPPENED TEN YEARS BACK WAS ALL SUBJECTIVE? ALL UNREAL?
I'D SAY IT WAS MORE SYMBOLIC. YOU INTERPRETED EVENTS ACCORDING TO THE PERSON YOU WERE.
DON'T INSULT ME BY PRETENDING NONE OF IT HAPPENED! I SHOULDN'T HAVE EVEN COME HERE! YOUR PATRONIZING ATTITUDE MAKES ME SICK! YOU THINK YOU'RE SOME POWERFUL--
ME? POWERFUL? I WOULDN'T HURT A FLY.

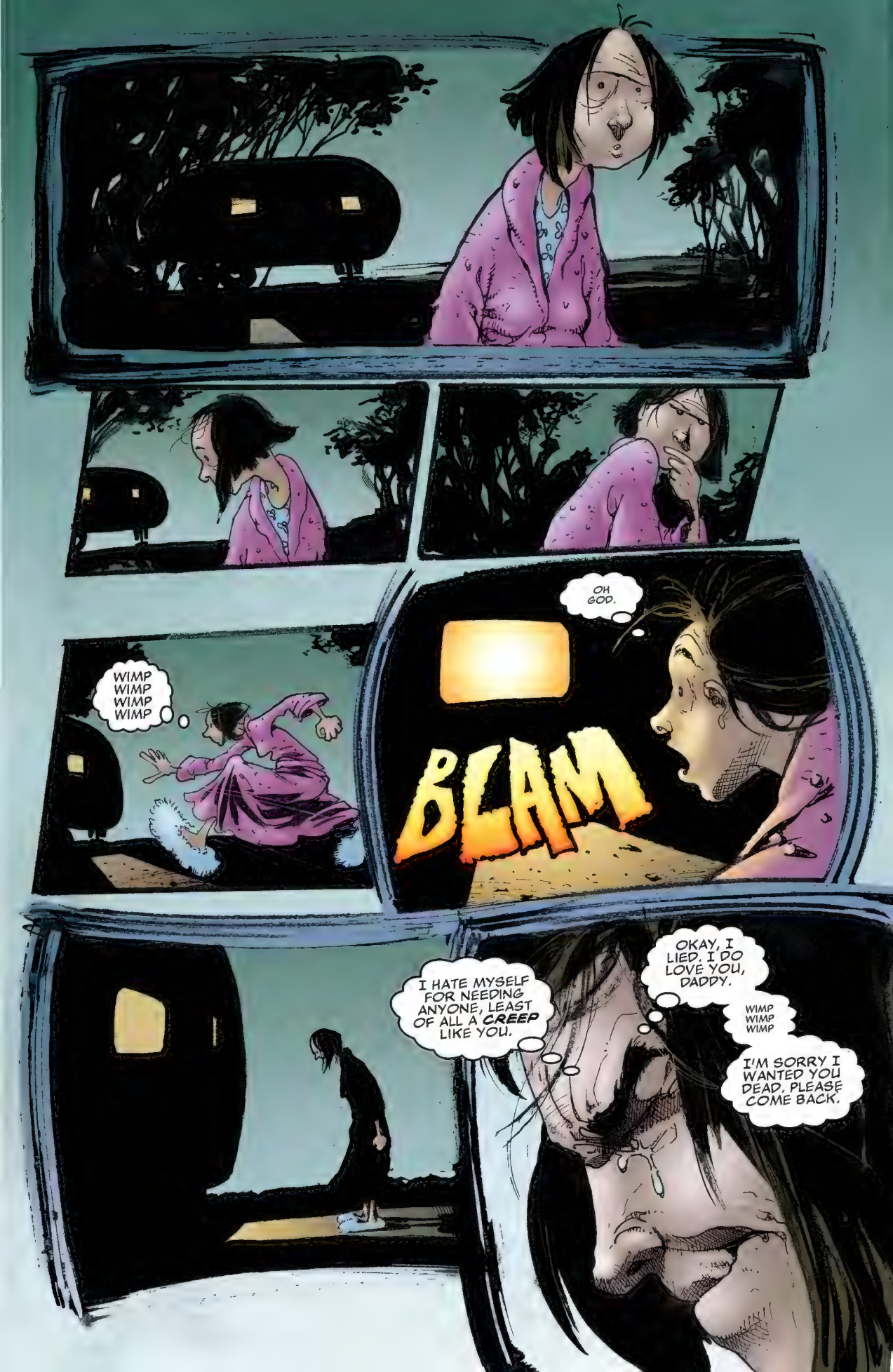
YEAH, RIGHT. NONE OF THE PAIN YOU CAUSED ME OR MOM ALL THOSE YEARS AGO SEEMS TO HAVE EVEN REGISTERED IN YOU.
I HATE YOU! I NEVER WANT TO SEE YOU AGAIN! I HOPE YOU DIE A SLOW, LONG, PATHETIC DEATH!
I'D KILL YOU MYSELF IF I WASN'T SUCH A WIMP!
I DON'T WANT ANYTHING FROM YOU...
...LEAST OF ALL, YOUR MONEY.


"BASS SOLO".
FRANKLIN, WHAT THE @%$# ARE YOU *TALKING* ABOUT?
I SWEAR, THIS IS THE LAST TIME I WORK WITH A $#@%&$# ALIEN ABDUCTEE. I *MEAN* IT.
GLYNN MARCHES TO A DIFFERENT *DRUMMER*, LARRY.
OH *YEAH?* LIKE *WHO?* THAT GUY FROM THE *MUPPETS?*
ANYWAY, WHAT'S SO *DERANGING* ABOUT BEIN' ABDUCTED BY ALIENS? MY *MOM* WAS ABDUCTED!
LARRY, THAT'S JUST WHAT EVERY-BODY *TOLD* YOU. WE'VE *BEEN* THROUGH THIS.
NOW LET ME *CONCENTRATE.* I HAVE A FEELING IRWIN WANTS US TO HANG A *LEFT.*
EVERYTHING'S GONE TO *HELL* SINCE MAJOR *ROSTEVAL* DIED. CHRIST, I HOPE *I* DON'T GO OUT LIKE *HE* DID.
THAT'S STATISTICALLY *UNLIKELY,* LARRY. IRWIN SPONTANEOUSLY *COMBUSTED.*
THAT'S NOT WHAT I *MEAN.* I MEAN DRESSED AS BARBARA STANWYCK IN THE BACK ROOM OF A *LEATHER* BAR.
ARE YOU STILL CHANNELLING HIS *TRAFFIC DIRECTIONS?* WHAT DOES HE *SAY?*
HE SAYS WE SHOULD GO TOWARDS THE LIGHT.
FLUSH!
GREAT.

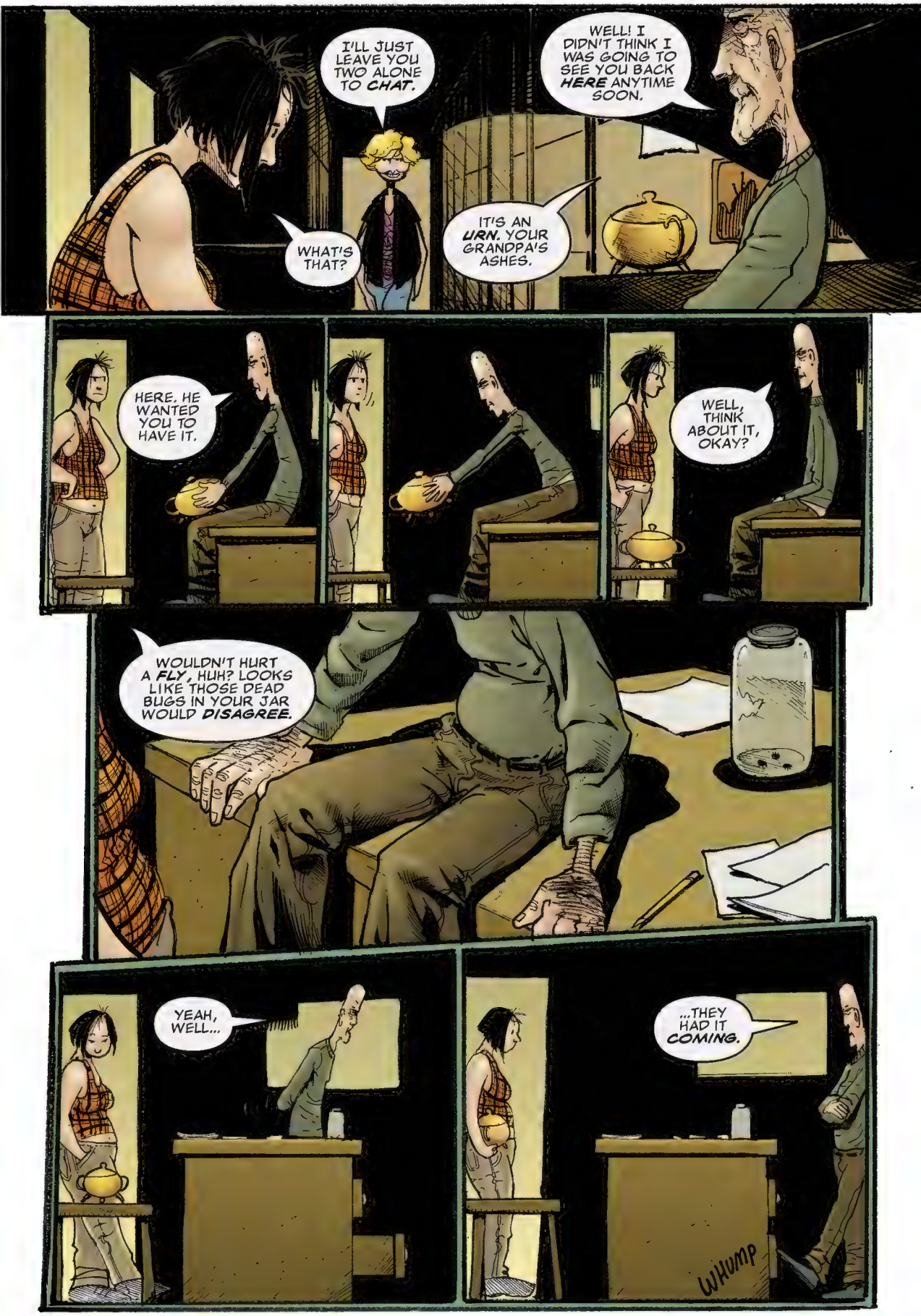

ONLY I WOULD FEEL GUILTY FOR YELLING AT A RAPIST.
THOUGH I HAVE THIS WEIRD FEELING...
...I SHOULD GO BACK AND SEE HIM.
LIKE SOMETHING'S UNFINISHED BETWEEN US.
I MEANT EVERYTHING I SAID, THOUGH.
REALLY.
LOOK AT THIS PIECE OF #$%& CAR! THE AGENCY IS @#$%&# LAUGHING AT US, MAKING US DRIVE THIS!


LARRY, YOU KNOW IRWIN SPENT MOST OF OUR BUDGET ON THOSE MOOD WALLS BACK AT THE OFFICE.
LET'S CONCENTRATE ON FINDING PENDER. WE'LL ASK SOMEBODY.
UH, EXCUSE ME, MA'AM? WE'RE LOOKING FOR AN ARTEMIS PENDER. HE, UH, HE SAID WE COULD MAYBE FIND A TRAILER ROUND HERE.
ARTIE PENDER? THAT IS SUCH A COINCIDENCE! I'M JUST GOIN' BY HIS PLACE NOW. IT'S THE ONE OVER THERE...
YOU BOYS WILL LOVE THIS PLACE. IT'S REAL EASY GOIN'. NOT A LOT OF RULES AN' REGULATIONS...
WELL, MA'AM, WE'VE GOT ONE MAJOR RULE OF OUR OWN...
REALLY? WHAT'S THAT?
WHUD
"NO WITNESSES."
I'LL JUST PEEK IN THE BACK AND SEE IF HE'S AWAKE.
COME ON.
LET'S DO THE $#@%&$¢ DEED.


I'M TOO LATE. HE'S ASLEEP.
ZZZZ
HEY...
...WHO THE HELL ARE THEY?
OH GOD! THEY'RE ACTUALLY GONNA KILL HIM!
SO? ISN'T THIS WHAT I WANTED ALL ALONG? TO HAVE HIM OUT OF MY LIFE FOREVER?
IF I REALLY HATE HIM SO MUCH, ALL I HAVE TO DO IS...
...WALK AWAY.


OH GOD.
WIMP WIMP WIMP WIMP
BLAM
I HATE MYSELF FOR NEEDING ANYONE, LEAST OF ALL A CREEP LIKE YOU.
OKAY, I LIED. I DO LOVE YOU, DADDY.
WIMP WIMP WIMP
I'M SORRY I WANTED YOU DEAD. PLEASE COME BACK.

DADDY...?
YOU'D THINK GOING OUT IN MY BATHROBE AND SLIPPERS IN THE MIDDLE OF THE NIGHT WOULD TIP ME OFF THAT I WAS DREAMING.
MAN, WHAT A CREEPY DREAM. DROP DEAD, NORBERT.
BUT THERE'S STILL SOMETHING...
...I HAVE TO KNOW.
ARE YOU OKAY?
YEAH, I JUST NEED SOME ICE FOR MY FOREHEAD.
ARTIE, WHAT'D YOU DO WITH THEIR GUNS?
IN THE DESK DRAWER.
LISTEN, GAYNOR, LAST NIGHT I SAW INTO SARA'S DREAM. SHE DREAMED WHAT REALLY HAPPENED HERE.
SHE SAW WHAT YOU DID TO THEM?
NO. IN HER DREAM, THEY KILLED ME. SHE PAUSED--THEN TRIED TO SAVE ME--BUT WAS TOO LATE.
SO SHE WANTED YOU TO LIVE MORE THAN SHE WAS TEMPTED TO LET YOU DIE.


I'LL JUST LEAVE YOU TWO ALONE TO CHAT.
WELL! I DIDN'T THINK I WAS GOING TO SEE YOU BACK HERE ANYTIME SOON.
WHAT'S THAT?
IT'S AN URN. YOUR GRANDPA'S ASHES.
HERE. HE WANTED YOU TO HAVE IT.
WELL, THINK ABOUT IT, OKAY?
WOULDN'T HURT A FLY, HUH? LOOKS LIKE THOSE DEAD BUGS IN YOUR JAR WOULD DISAGREE.
YEAH, WELL...
...THEY HAD IT COMING.
WHUMP

SO, SARA, WHY ARE YOU HERE?
I DUNNO. I HAD THIS DREAM THAT I CAME TO SEE YOU LAST NIGHT, AND THESE THINGS BROKE IN, AND I SAW THEM KILL YOU.
AND YOU CAME TO SEE IF I WAS OKAY?
DON'T FLATTER YOURSELF. I GUESS I JUST CAME TO SAY GOODBYE.
SARA, IN THE DREAM...WHEN YOU SAW THEM ABOUT TO KILL ME, DID YOU TRY AND STOP THEM?
NO.

SHE LET ME DIE. SHE REALLY DOESN'T CARE.
I THINK SHE DOES.
NO. SHE DOESN'T.

NO MATTER HOW PISSED SHE IS RIGHT NOW...YOU SAW SHE CAME BACK TO SAVE YOU IN HER DREAM.

SHE STILL CARES.

GAYNOR, SHE LIED.

HONEY, THE ONLY ONE SHE WAS LYING TO...

...WAS HERSELF.

Chapter Four

THE MASK

HEY, MISTER DOWN-AND-OUT!
AFFIRM YOUR BELIEF IN THE INSTITUTIONS THAT SUPPORT YOU.
START A SCHOOL SAFETY CAMPAIGN.
DONATE TO YOUR LOCAL CHURCH OR SYNAGOGUE.
LET OTHERS KNOW YOU CARE.
CRUNCH
TAKE THE RISK OF CLOSENESS.
ADOPT A PET.
REMEMBER, SELF-DOUBT SEEMS MORE OVERWHELMING WHEN YOU'RE TIRED.

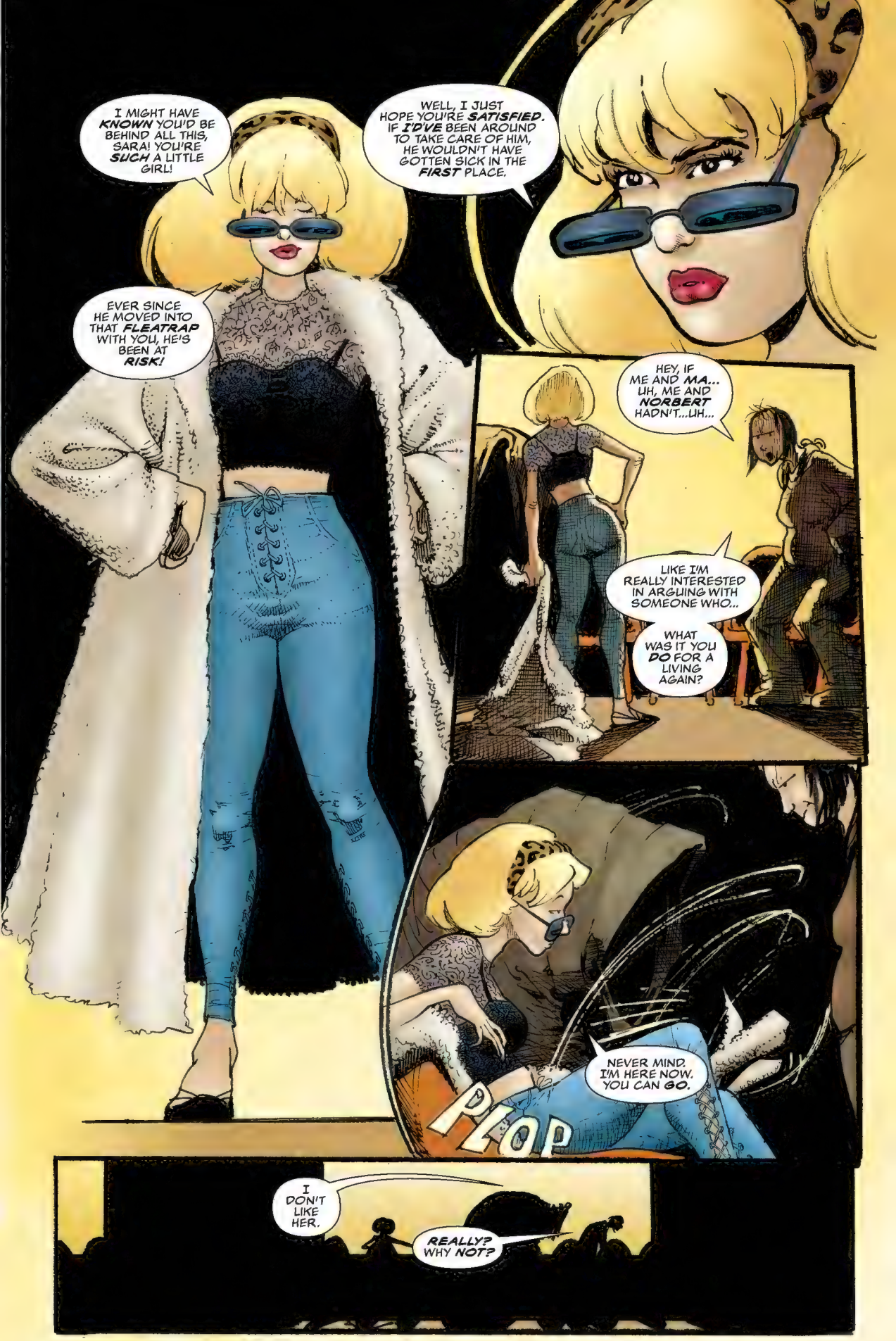
OTHER PEOPLES CRAP
BOY, ONE LI'L KITTY SURE MAKES A LOT OF POOP.
'COURSE IT'S MY CAT. IT COMES BACK TO ME EVERY NIGHT!
IT ONLY COMES BACK HERE TO CRAP, AND THEN IT LEAVES! IT DOESN'T EVEN EAT HERE!
WHY DO YOU BOTHER WITH THAT THING, SARA? IT'S NOT EVEN YOUR CAT!
YOU SHOULDN'T BE SO TOLERANT OF OTHER PEOPLE'S NONSENSE...HEY, DID THAT GLASS JUST MOVE?
WELL... SOMEBODY'S GOT TO CLEAN IT UP.
NO, STEVE. THE GLASS NEVER MOVES.
IT'S THAT KIND OF NEGATIVE THINKING THAT KEEPS MORE PEOPLE FROM BECOMING TELEKINETIC!

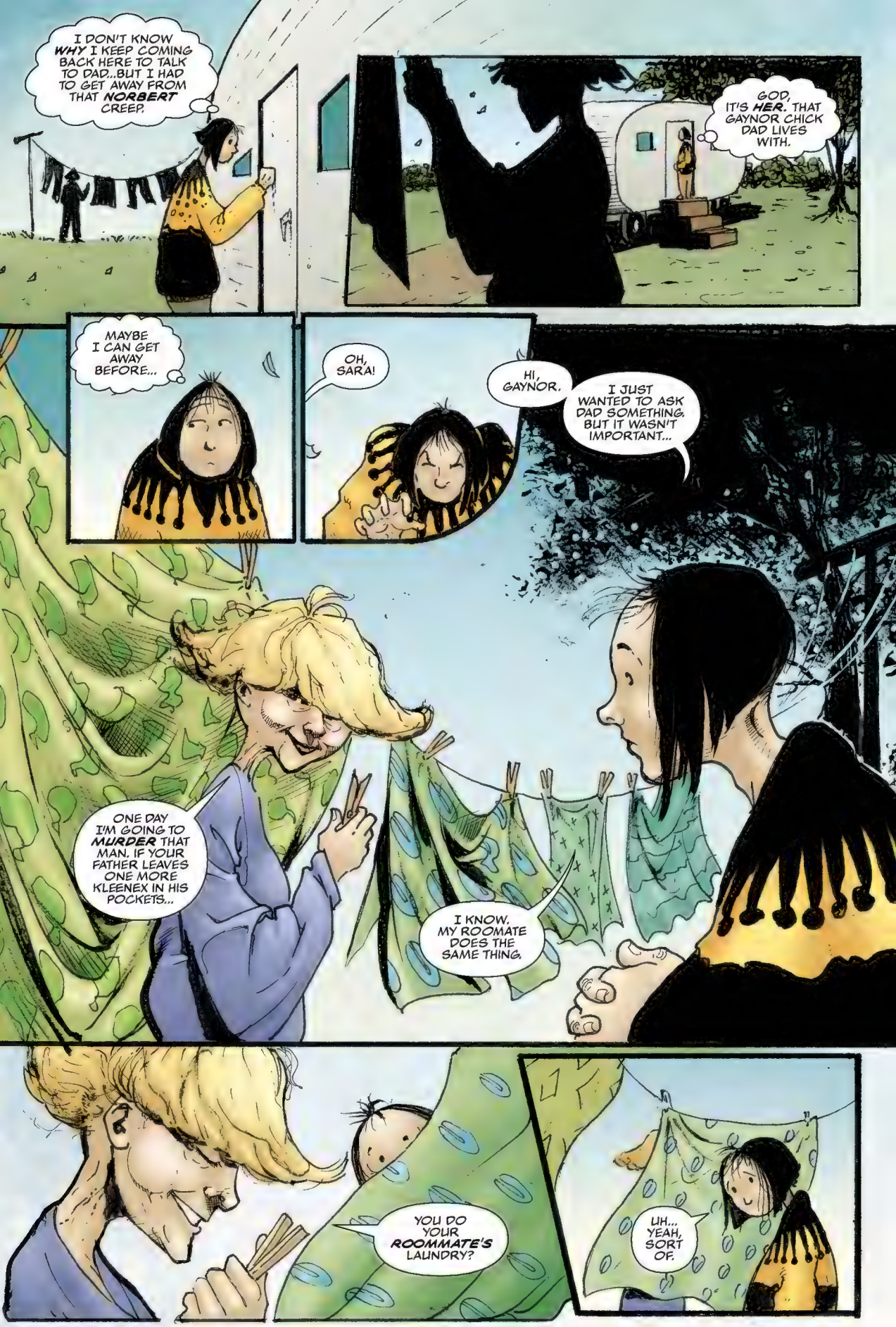
YEAH, ADVICE FROM A GUY WHO TRIES TO SOLVE HIS PERSONAL PROBLEMS BY MOVING A GLASS OF WATER WITH HIS MIND.
SO WHAT'S IN THE POT?
IT'S AN URN.
OKAY, SO WHO'S IN THE POT?
GRANDPA. DAD GAVE HIM TO ME YESTERDAY.
IT KINDA CREEPS ME OUT. CAN YOU HIDE IT AWAY ON TOP OF THE FRIDGE?
YOUR GRAMPS ISN'T THE UNDEAD GHOST OF THE HOMOSEXUAL DIRECTOR OF A HIDDEN DOMESTIC SPY RING, WAS HE?
NOPE. HE WAS A SHRINER. WHY?
JUST A PREMONITION.
I GET THESE FLASHES OF INSIGHT, YOU KNOW.
YES, YOU'RE AN EXCEPTIONAL PERSON. I JUST WISH OCCASIONALLY YOU'D GET A FLASH OF REALITY.
UFO REPORT
ESP AND GOVERNMENT EXPERIMENTS
SETH SPEAKS
MIND POWER
ROSWELL CRASH
BRAIN FOOD
X-FILES
MOVING WATER WITH YOUR MIND
EDGAR CASEY
WHAT DO YOU MEAN?
NEVER MIND.

3 A.M.
ARRRGHHH!
STEVE...
GNAAHH. I DON'T FEEL SO GOOD, SARA.
OH, GEEZ. GET UP, STEVE. I GOTTA GET YOU TO A DOCTOR. I CAN'T CARRY YOU MYSELF. I NEED HELP...
OH GREAT. WHAT NOW?
SARA, IT'S ME!
NORBERT!
NO... THE MAXX! I NEED TO TALK TO YOU, SARA.
I'LL CARRY YOUR FRIEND TO THE TRIAGE-CLINIC. I APPEARED IN THE NICK OF TIME BECAUSE I AM...
THE MAXX!
GNAUUH.

NORBERT, IF YOU SAY "MAXX" ONE MORE TIME...
BUT I AM HIM. I LIVED IN PARADISE WITH A BEAUTIFUL PRINCESS...
...AND AN UGLY YELLOW WYRM NAMED IAGO. BUT THE WORM WAS SMALL AND HAD NO POWER. NOW...
MAN, I COULDN'T FIND STEVE'S GINGRICH-STAMPS...
SNOORF
I BET THEY WON'T TREAT HIM WITHOUT THEM...
THE EVIL IAGO IS LOOSE IN THIS WORLD. HE'S GOT A LIST...
IT WOULD BE SO NICE IF ONE PERSON I KNEW WASN'T NUTS!
...AND HE'S CHECKING IT TWICE! I HAVE TO STOP HIM BEFORE...
IF YOU TURN OUT TO BE A BUM I HIT IN AN ACCIDENT I'VE FORGOTTEN ABOUT, I'M REALLY GONNA BE PISSED.

I AM NOT HUMAN. I AM AN EQUINE ELEMENTAL... A HORSE.
UH-HUH.
WHUMP
YOU DON'T BELIEVE ME.
SIGH
WAIT A MINUTE! YOU MEAN I COULD JUST PULL THIS HOOD BACK, AND YOU'D BE A HORSE UNDER HERE?
SARA! WHAT HAVE YOU DONE TO MY STEVE?!
SKYE. GREAT. LIKE I REALLY NEEDED ANOTHER PROCTOLOGICAL EXAM RIGHT ABOUT NOW.
NO, WAIT! YOU MUSTN'T SEE MY TRUE FACE YET. YOU DON'T BELIEVE.
RIIIGGHHT!

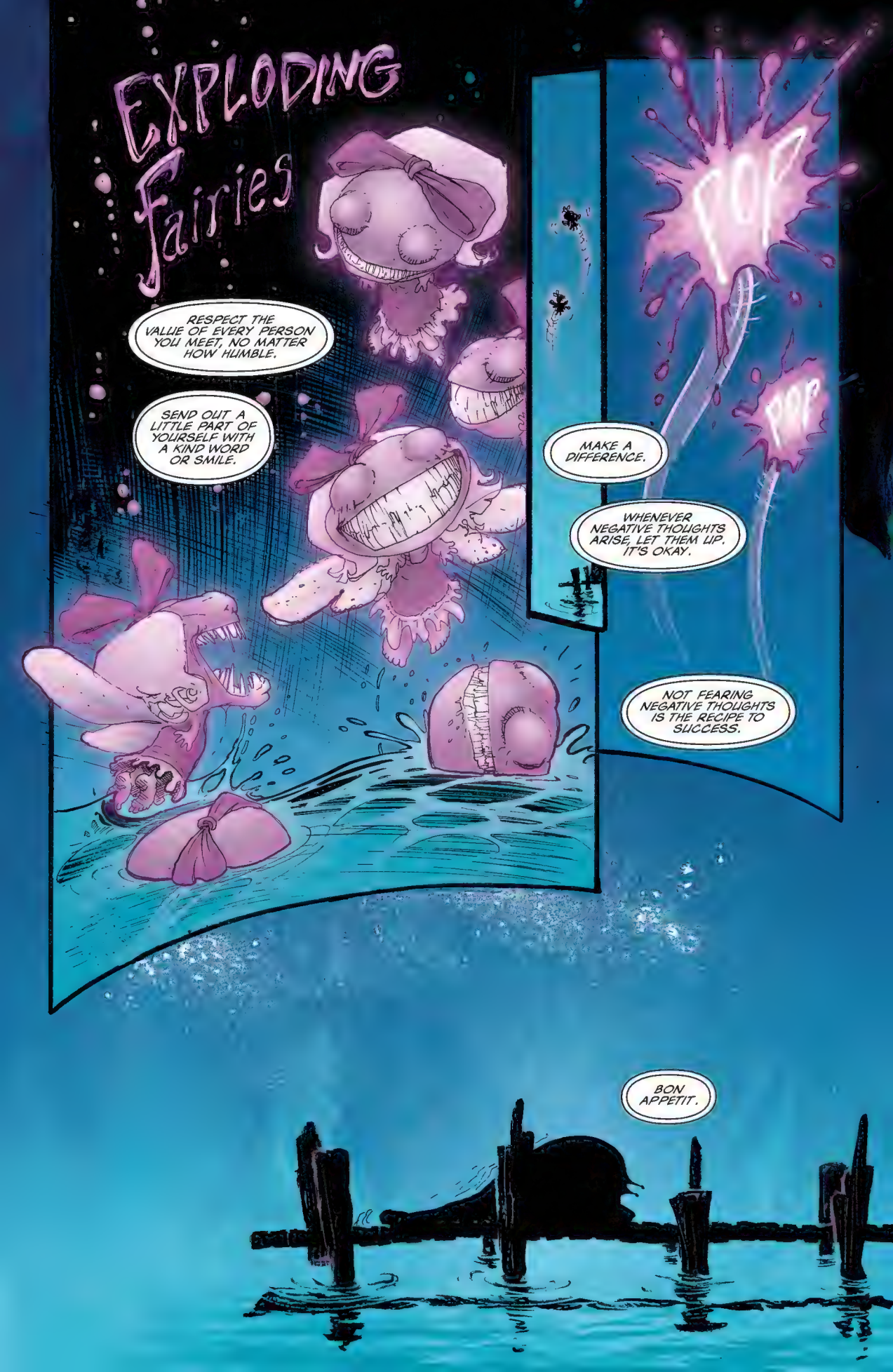

I MIGHT HAVE KNOWN YOU'D BE BEHIND ALL THIS, SARA! YOU'RE SUCH A LITTLE GIRL!
WELL, I JUST HOPE YOU'RE SATISFIED. IF I'D'VE BEEN AROUND TO TAKE CARE OF HIM, HE WOULDN'T HAVE GOTTEN SICK IN THE FIRST PLACE.
EVER SINCE HE MOVED INTO THAT FLEATRAP WITH YOU, HE'S BEEN AT RISK!
HEY, IF ME AND MA... UH, ME AND NORBERT HADN'T...UH...
LIKE I'M REALLY INTERESTED IN ARGUING WITH SOMEONE WHO...
WHAT WAS IT YOU DO FOR A LIVING AGAIN?
PLOP
NEVER MIND. I'M HERE NOW. YOU CAN GO.
I DON'T LIKE HER.
REALLY? WHY NOT?


I DON'T KNOW WHY I KEEP COMING BACK HERE TO TALK TO DAD...BUT I HAD TO GET AWAY FROM THAT NORBERT CREEP.
GOD, IT'S HER. THAT GAYNOR CHICK DAD LIVES WITH.
MAYBE I CAN GET AWAY BEFORE...
OH, SARA!
HI, GAYNOR.
I JUST WANTED TO ASK DAD SOMETHING. BUT IT WASN'T IMPORTANT...
ONE DAY I'M GOING TO MURDER THAT MAN. IF YOUR FATHER LEAVES ONE MORE KLEENEX IN HIS POCKETS...
I KNOW. MY ROOMATE DOES THE SAME THING.
YOU DO YOUR ROOMMATE'S LAUNDRY?
UH... YEAH, SORT OF.

IT'S OKAY. IT'S NOTHING TO BE ASHAMED OF.
ALTHOUGH WE COMPLAIN, MAYBE WE'RE THE TYPE THAT SECRETLY DRAWS COMFORT FROM TAKING CARE OF OTHER PEOPLE.
UH, RIGHT.
LISTEN, GAYNOR... I DON'T KNOW YOU VERY WELL, BUT THERE'S SOME STUFF ABOUT MY DAD YOU NEED TO KNOW.
HONEY, THIS ISN'T ALL ABOUT THAT EVIL-SORCERER-RAPING-AND-KILLING-AND-LOSING-HIS-HEAD-THING, IS IT?
MY DEAR, I KNOW ALL THAT.
YOU DO?
OF COURSE. ARTIE TOLD ME YEARS AGO.
HE WAS MENTALLY ILL...
SO HE'S DUPED YOU TOO?
EVERYBODY TAKES HIS SIDE! DOESN'T IT BOTHER YOU WHAT HE DID TO THOSE WOMEN?
I--
LOOK, YOU DON'T GET IT, YOU'RE IN DANGER!
HE'LL DESTROY YOU TOO! I KNOW HIM!
LISTEN TO YOURSELF, CHILD. FOR THE LAST EIGHT YEARS HE'S WORKED WITH ABUSED WOMEN AND CHILDREN. THAT'S HOW I MET HIM!
SARA--? ARE YOU OKAY?
THIS COULDN'T GET ANY @#$%&*% WEIRDER.

STEVE! YOU'RE HOME! HOW'D YOU GET BACK FROM THE CLINIC? IT'S FIVE MILES!
I WALKED. AFTER YOU DESERTED ME. NOT THAT I'M BLAMING YOU.
SO HOW'D IT GO WITH YOUR DAD?
HE WASN'T THERE. BUT YOU WON'T BELIEVE THE LOAD OF CRAP HE'S GOT HIS GIRLFRIEND BELIEVING.
WHY DIDN'T SKYE BRING YOU BACK?
SKYE? SKYE WASN'T THERE...IT'S ALL RIGHT, SARA. I WAS NEVER ACTUALLY THAT SICK.
SEE, YESTERDAY I ATE FIFTEEN BOXES OF CEREAL...
OMIGOD. WITH ALL THAT SUGAR AND NICOTINE? WHY?
I...I NEEDED THE RUSH. IT MAKES MY MIND STRONGER!
SO YOU GAVE YOURSELF ANGINA AND GOD KNOWS WHAT ELSE, ALL SO YOU CAN MOVE THAT STUPID WATER GLASS?
I CAN'T DO THIS ANYMORE, STEVE.

CLIC
LESSEE... ROOMMATE...ARTISTIC, MIXED GENDERS, FULL-SPECTRUM DIET, SANE...
HERE'S SOMEBODY...27, BODY-POET, AFRI-CAUK, DEGREE IN FABRIC SYNTHESIS...
I'VE ALWAYS WANTED TO KNOW MORE ABOUT BODY-POETRY...
MOVE
MOVE
MOVE
OKAY, THAT'S IT. THINGS HAVE GOTTA CHANGE AROUND HERE!
I'LL CLEAN UP. I'LL GET A REAL JOB!
NO MORE NICOTINE CEREAL!
LOOPY CRAP
AND SKYE?
PAST TENSE, I SWEAR! I'M NOT PUTTING UP WITH ANYMORE OF HER ABUSE. SHE'S OUT!
FRUITY JUNKY CRAP
AND THE META-PHIZ?
I'LL CUT WAY BACK. DOWN TO HALF AN HOUR OF GLASS MOVING BEFORE BED, REALLY!
AND THIS ISN'T LIKE ALL THE OTHER TIMES, SARA. THIS TIME'S FOR REAL!
AND BY THE WAY, DON'T FEEL GUILTY. I KNOW THE THREATENING TO KICK ME OUT IS YOUR WAY OF TAKING CARE OF ME.
GRRRR
I UNDER-STAND, REALLY. G'NIGHT.
GRRRRR

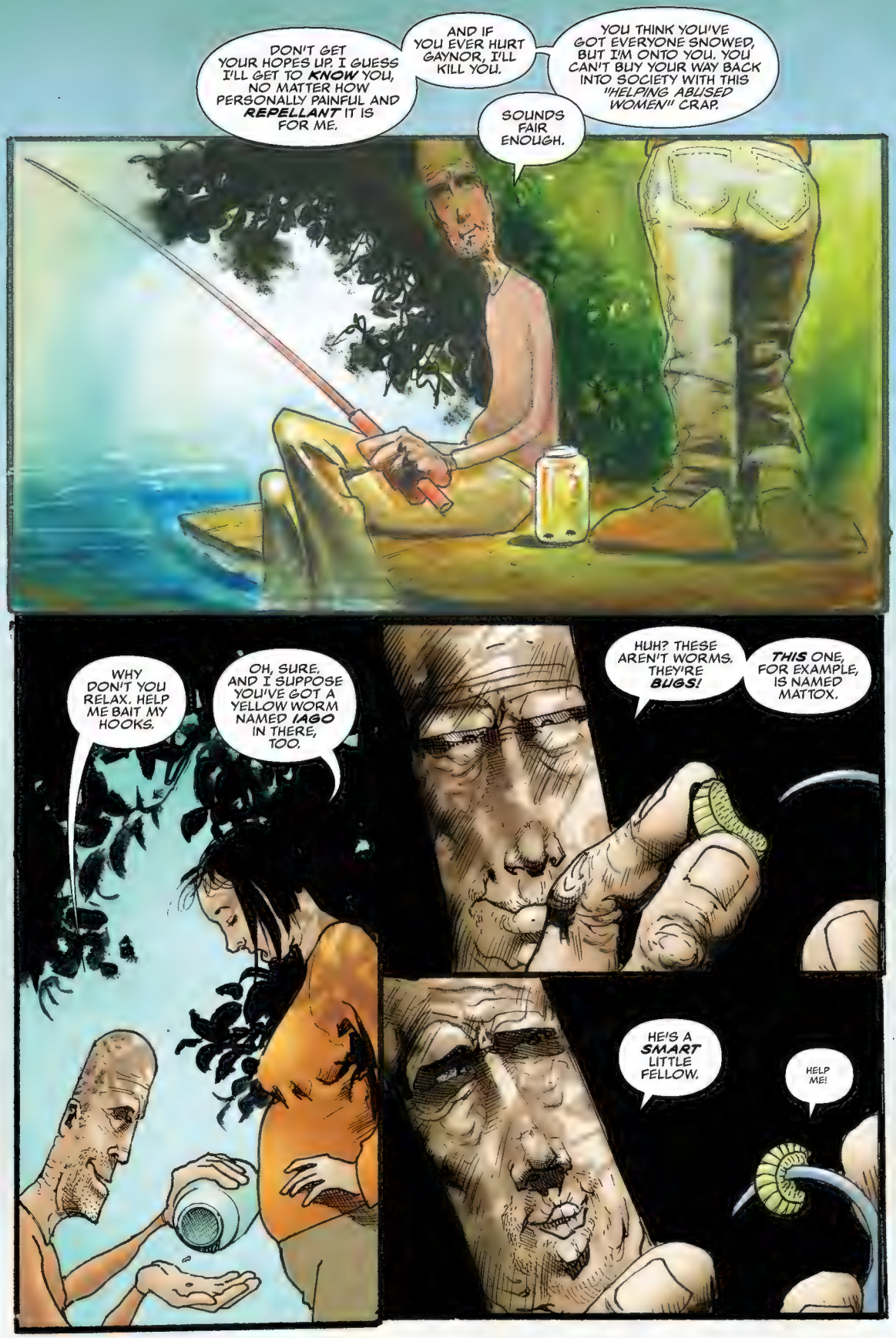

EXPLODING Fairies
RESPECT THE VALUE OF EVERY PERSON YOU MEET, NO MATTER HOW HUMBLE.
SEND OUT A LITTLE PART OF YOURSELF WITH A KIND WORD OR SMILE.
POP
POP
MAKE A DIFFERENCE.
WHENEVER NEGATIVE THOUGHTS ARISE, LET THEM UP. IT'S OKAY.
NOT FEARING NEGATIVE THOUGHTS IS THE RECIPE TO SUCCESS.
BON APPETIT.

NEGATIVE THOUGHTS ARE LIKE BAD FAIRIES WHICH MUST BE FED TO STAY ALIVE.
STARVE THOSE NEGATIVE THOUGHTS!
WITHOUT ANYTHING TO EAT, THEY'LL JUST FLOAT UP AND MAGICALLY DISAPPEAR.
SPLASH
AND REMEMBER, REMOVE DANGEROUS HAZARDS IN THE WORKPLACE. CARING FOR OTHERS'SAFETY IS A SIGN THAT YOU CARE FOR THEM!

I ended up treating Steve like a pet not a person. What's wrong with me? I'm no better than
CLICK CLICK CLICK CLICK CLICK
SKYE! WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE? YOU'VE BEEN DUMPED, OR DIDN'T YOU KNOW IT? YOU CAN'T JUST DITCH SOMEONE AND EXPECT THEM TO FORGET IT!
ANOTHER NEO-LUDDITE MANIFESTO, SARA?
GET OFF THE BED, SKYE! I'M WORKING HERE!
"WORKING" IMPLIES WRITING SOMETHING FOR ACTUAL MONEY.
DID I MENTION I'M BOOKED FOR THREE MORE WEEKS AT THE REEFER?
I GOTTA SEE STEVIE!
HE DOESN'T WANT TO SEE...! CRAP.

STEVE, REMEMBER HOW THE DOCTOR SAID YOU SHOULD TAKE IT EASY AND STAY INSIDE...?
LET HIM TELL ME! STEVIE...?
STEVIE!?
THERE YOU ARE! WANNA GO DOWNTOWN TO A HAPPENING? HOME BY TEN... PWOMISS!
GEE, I OUGHTA CHANGE...
YOU'RE FINE. LET'S TRIM!
WELL, I GOTTA BE BACK... I PROMISED TO CLEAN UP AND I GOTTA LOOK FOR A...
WELL, MAYBE JUST FOR AN HOUR... WE'RE GOING TO DREK'S, SARA!
He doesn't care if she breaks his heart. And she sure doesn't care.
SLAM
So what's my problem?

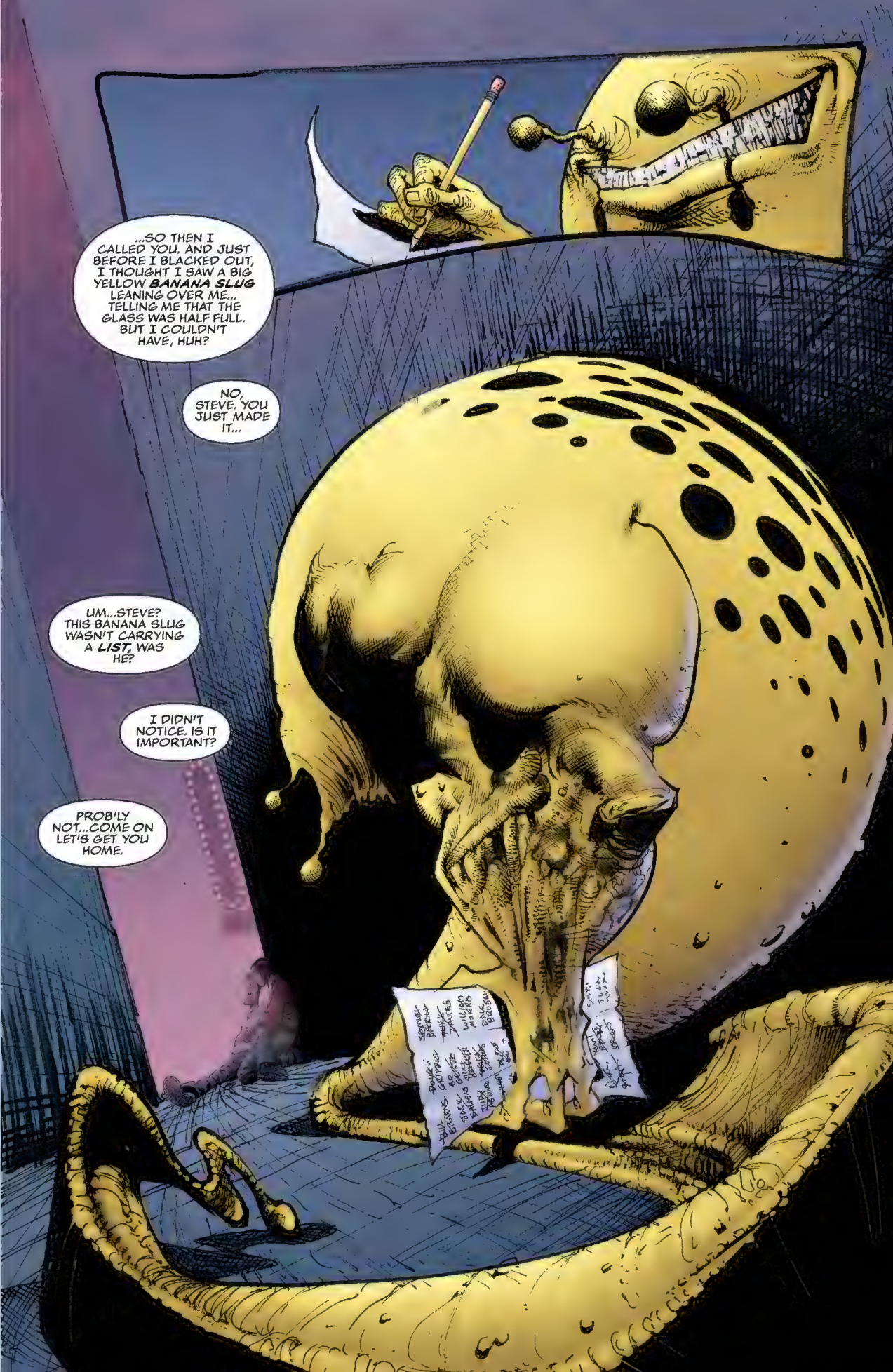
HMM, STEVE NEVER DID COME HOME LAST NIGHT. I HOPE HE'S NOT--
YOU KNOW WHAT, SCREW IT. HE'S A GROWN MAN.
I'VE GOT BETTER THINGS TO WORRY ABOUT.
MAYBE I CAN FIND OUT WHAT GONE'S UP TO WITH THESE LIES HE'S TELLING GAYNOR.
HMM. GUESS NOBODY'S HOME.
MAYBE IF I FOLLOW THOSE HO-HO WRAPPERS...
OH. IT'S YOU.
HEY! YOU'RE BACK!


DON'T GET YOUR HOPES UP. I GUESS I'LL GET TO KNOW YOU, NO MATTER HOW PERSONALLY PAINFUL AND REPELLANT IT IS FOR ME.
AND IF YOU EVER HURT GAYNOR, I'LL KILL YOU.
YOU THINK YOU'VE GOT EVERYONE SNOWED, BUT I'M ONTO YOU. YOU CAN'T BUY YOUR WAY BACK INTO SOCIETY WITH THIS "HELPING ABUSED WOMEN" CRAP.
SOUNDS FAIR ENOUGH.
WHY DON'T YOU RELAX. HELP ME BAIT MY HOOKS.
OH, SURE. AND I SUPPOSE YOU'VE GOT A YELLOW WORM NAMED IAGO IN THERE, TOO.
HUH? THESE AREN'T WORMS. THEY'RE BUGS!
THIS ONE, FOR EXAMPLE, IS NAMED MATTOX.
HE'S A SMART LITTLE FELLOW.
HELP ME!

I'M ALWAYS TAKING CARE OF OTHER PEOPLE'S CRAP.
THE CAT'S, YOURS, STEVE'S, SKYE'S.
WHO'S SKYE?
NEVER MIND.
I SWEAR TO GOD, I MUST BE WEARING A SIGN ON MY BACK THAT SAYS "SUCKER".
I THINK IT'S MORE THAT IT READS "WILL NURTURE FOR INTIMACY".
LIKE I SAID, THE ONLY WAY I CAN GET MY ROOMMATE TO DO ANY CHORES IS TO THREATEN TO KICK HIM OUT.
YOU DON'T HAVE TO THREATEN HIM. YOU HAVE OTHER POWERS AT YOUR DISPOSAL. YOU'RE MY DAUGHTER, REMEMBER?
SPLASH!
GO TO HELL! I CAN'T BELIEVE I'M EVEN TALKING TO YOU!
SARA, WAIT!

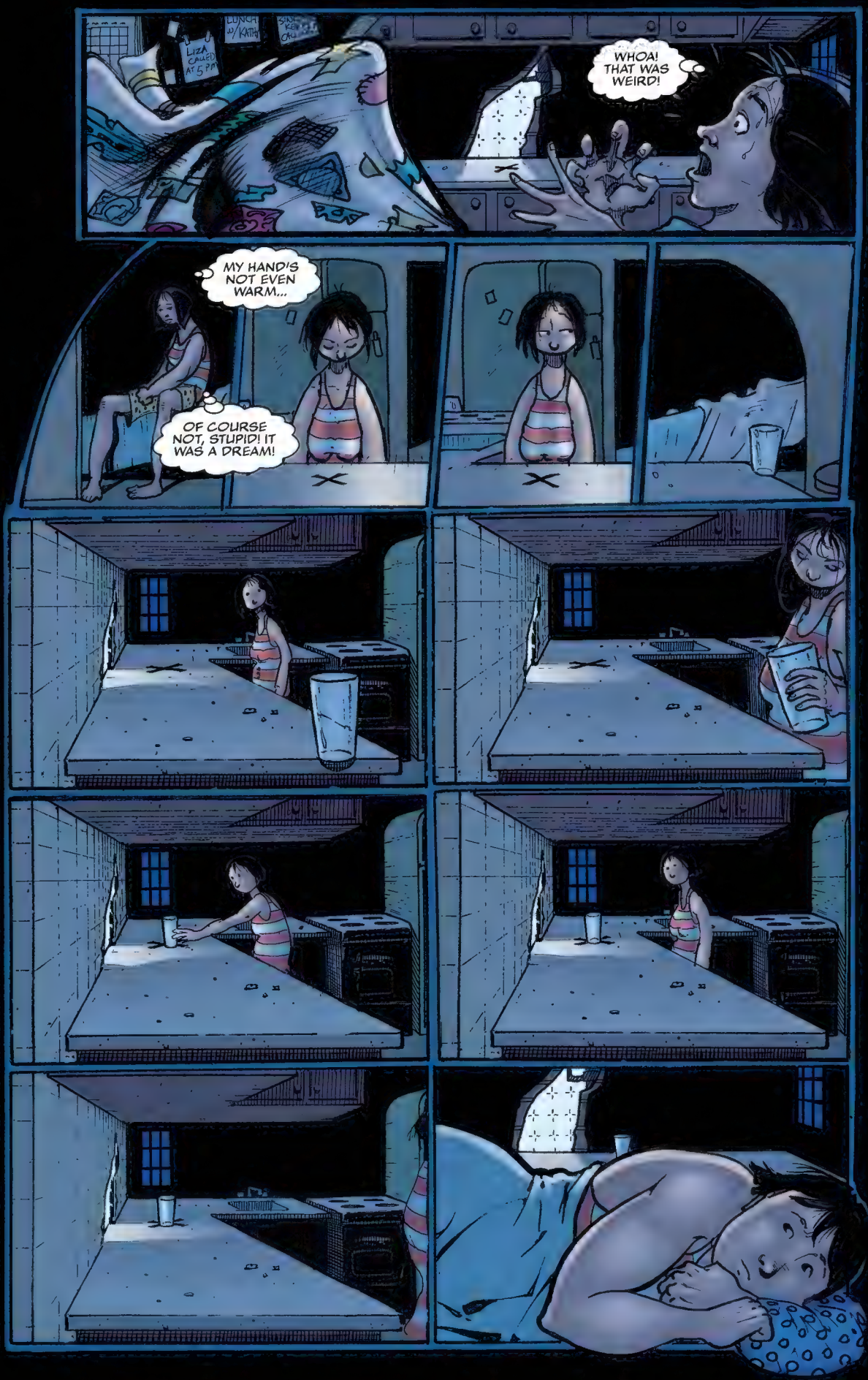
BACK AT HOME.
SARA...SKYE LEFT WITH HER EX-HUSBAND...WHO PUSHED ME OUT OF A WINDOW...I THINK MY LEG'S BROKEN...
STEVE!
I HOPE YOU HAVEN'T REPLACED ME WITH A NEW ROOMMATE YET...SHE HAD ME EAT FIVE CANDY BARS IN THIRTY SECONDS TO SEE WHAT WOULD HAPPEN...I CAN'T SEE...
HE MUST BE NEAR CLUB DREK'S...
SARA!
OH, STEVE!
WHEN I WENT BLIND, SKYE JUST LAUGHED. SHE LAUGHED, SARA.
HOW'S MY LEG?
IT'S THE FIRST FLOOR, STEVE. YOU'LL LIVE.
I DON'T THINK SHE CARES ABOUT ME AT ALL. SHE'S JUST USING ME FOR MY POWERS.
THANK GOD YOU'RE HERE, SARA. YOU'RE MY ONLY FRIEND. ONLY YOU UNDERSTAND.
SHUT UP, STEVE.
YOU'LL SEE... ONE DAY THAT GLASS WILL MOVE, AND EVERYTHING EVERYONE SAYS ABOUT ME WILL BE WRONG.

MY ONLY CHANCE AT HAPPINESS IS MOVING OBJECTS WITH MY MIND.
EVERYBODY IN MY LIFE SEEMS SO LAME. GAYNOR PUTS UP WITH GONE'S LIES, GONE PUTS UP WITH MY ABUSE, STEVE PUTS UP WITH SKYE, AND I PUT UP WITH STEVE. BUT THE QUESTION IS, WHY?
WHY AM I AFRAID TO LET ANYONE TAKE CARE OF ME?
GOD! I HAVEN'T THOUGHT ABOUT HIM FOR YEARS! HE WAS THAT KID IN HIGH SCHOOL THAT HUMILIATED ME!
I REMEMBER I SWORE I'D NEVER OPEN UP TO ANYONE AGAIN...BUT IT WAS TOO LATE. MY SICK MIND HAD ALREADY LEARNED THE LESSON THAT HUMILIATION IS THE PRICE OF LOVE.
JIMMY...!
IT'S LIKE SOMEHOW PART OF ME ACTUALLY BELIEVES THAT I DON'T DESERVE TO FEEL INTIMACY UNLESS I PUT UP WITH SOMEONE'S CRAP.
THAT'S THE SIGN I STUCK ON MY OWN BACK.


...SO THEN I CALLED YOU. AND JUST BEFORE I BLACKED OUT, I THOUGHT I SAW A BIG YELLOW BANANA SLUG LEANING OVER ME... TELLING ME THAT THE GLASS WAS HALF FULL. BUT I COULDN'T HAVE, HUH?
NO, STEVE. YOU JUST MADE IT...
UM...STEVE? THIS BANANA SLUG WASN'T CARRYING A LIST, WAS HE?
I DIDN'T NOTICE. IS IT IMPORTANT?
PROB'LY NOT...COME ON LET'S GET YOU HOME.

WHUMP
WHUMP
WHUMP
I'M SICK OF STEVE'S TRIPS...BUT EVEN IF I CAN'T RELY ON HIM, I DO LIKE HAVING HIM AROUND.
HEY, SARA! I C'N SEE AGAIN!
DO YOU THINK THAT'S PROOF OF MY PARANORMAL POWERS?
NAH. THE NICOTINE POISONING JUST WORE OFF.
I GUESS YOU JUST CHOOSE WHAT CRAP YOU'LL PUT UP WITH...
...AND WHAT YOU WON'T.
OKAY, STEVE. I... AWW. POOR GUY.
zZzzzz.
IF ONLY STEVE COULD DRAW A SENSE OF COMFORT FROM REALITY, INSTEAD OF HATING HIS LIFE SO MUCH HE MUST ESCAPE...
WELL, AT LEAST THINGS ARE BACK TO NORMAL.

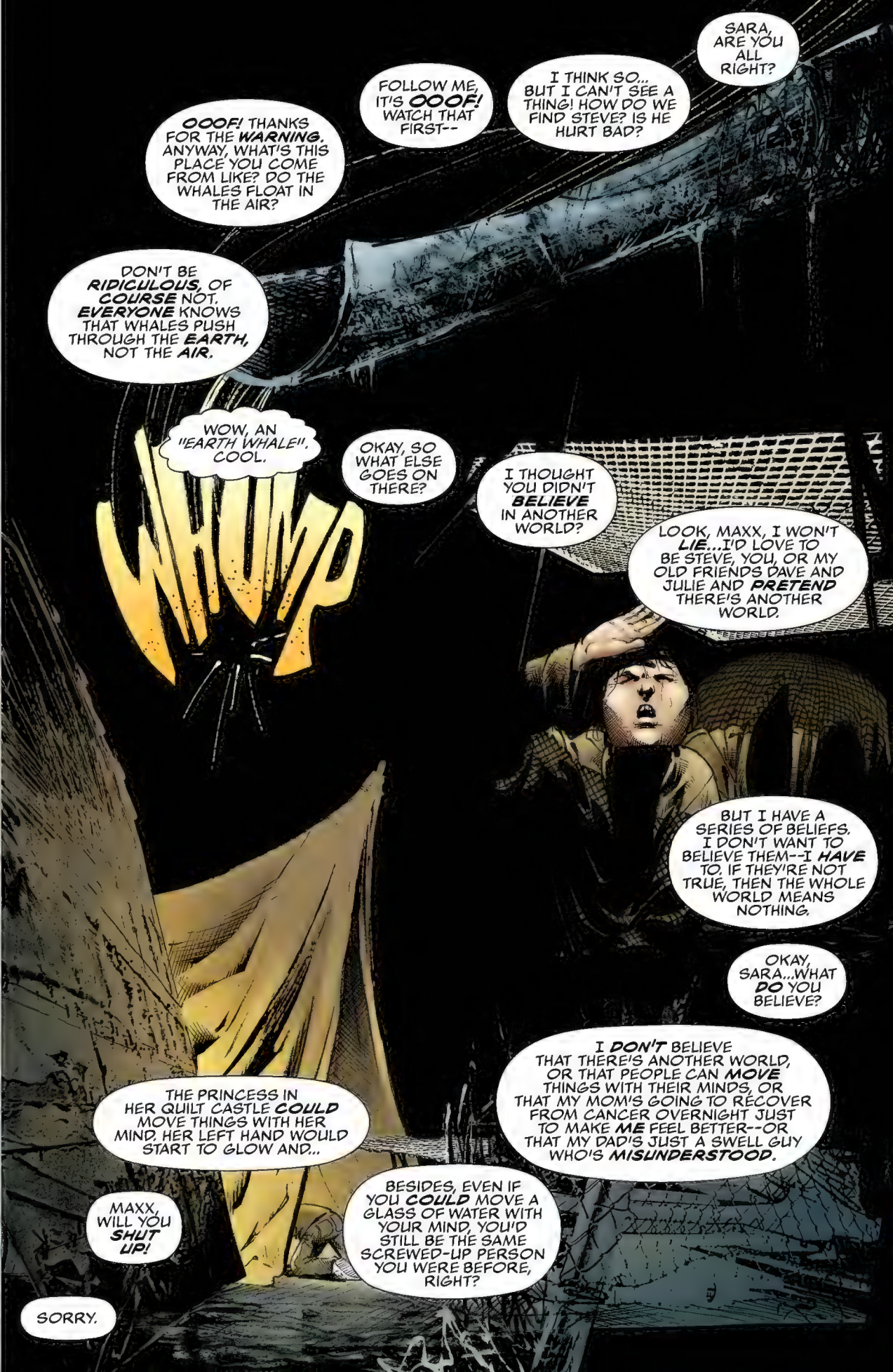
FUNNY. MY HAND NEVER GLOWED BEFORE.
GEE, I GUESS I'D BETTER GET SOME WATER ON THIS.
FUNNY, IT DOESN'T HURT...
SCRAPE SCRAPE
SCRAPE SCRAPE SCRAPE
SCRAPE SCRAPE


LIZA CALLED AT 5 PM
LUNCH W/ KATHY
WHOA! THAT WAS WEIRD!
MY HAND'S NOT EVEN WARM...
OF COURSE NOT, STUPID! IT WAS A DREAM!

Chapter Five
THE MAX

HAVING TO BELIEVE
SARA, ARE YOU AWAKE?
I AM NOW...
I'M HERE TO SHOW YOU PANGEA.
AT 3 A.M.?
YES.
CAN'T THIS WAIT UNTIL MORNING?
IT'S THE ONLY WAY TO STOP IAGO THE SLUG FROM KILLING AGAIN.
LOOK, NORBERT... I DUNNO...
SARA, IF I TOLD YOU THAT STEVE WAS HURT AND NEEDED YOUR HELP, AND I COULD TAKE YOU TO HIM, WOULD YOU COME WITH ME THEN?
OF COURSE NOT. YOU'RE VERY DISCRIMINATING.
-SIGH-
I DON'T GET OUT OF BED IN THE MIDDLE OF THE NIGHT FOR JUST ANYBODY...
OKAY, I CHECKED... HE'S NOT IN BED. BUT YOU BETTER NOT BE SCREWING WITH ME, NORBERT...

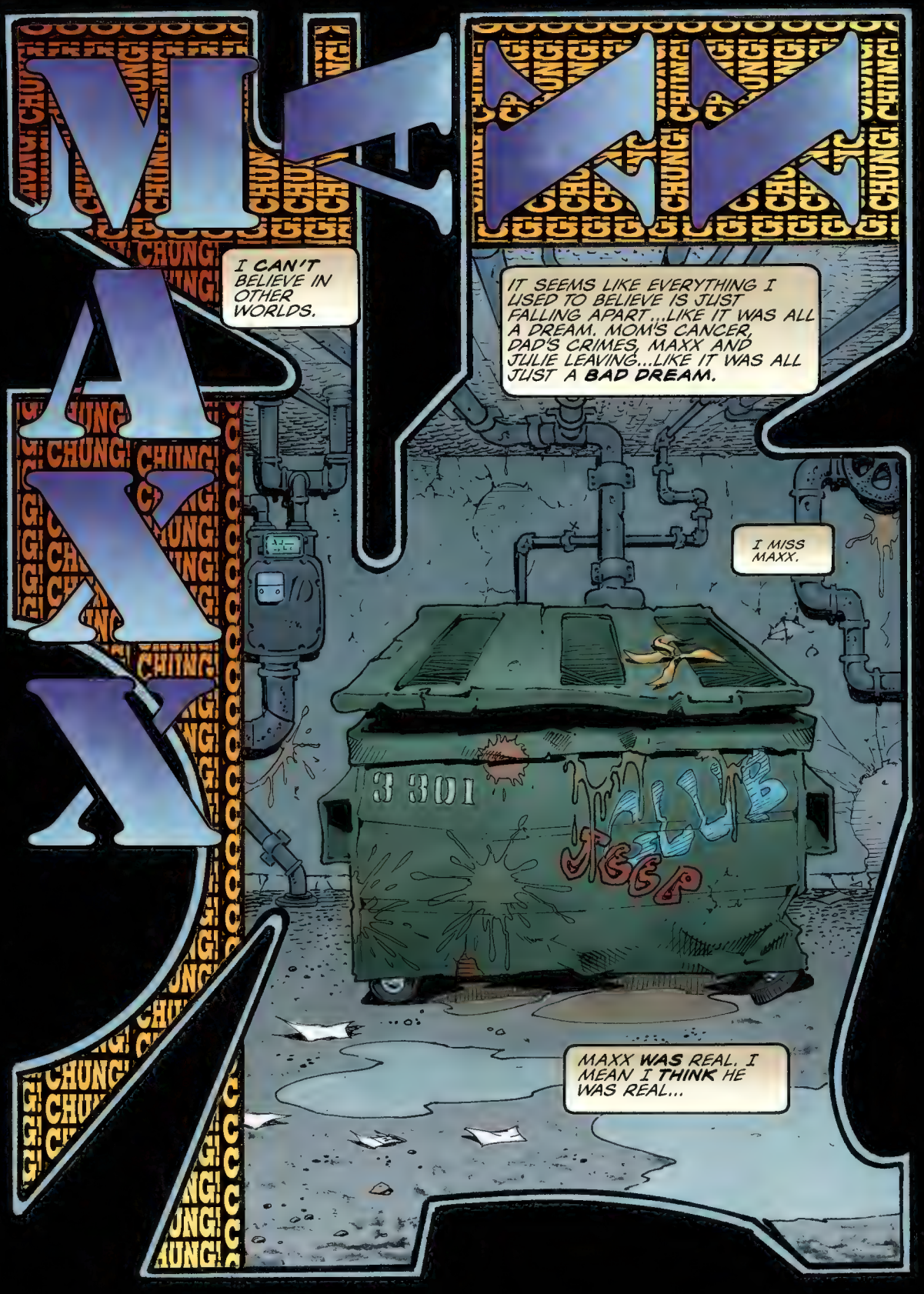
WE'RE HOME.
SARA, YOU'RE ABOUT TO ENTER A MAGICAL PLACE.
A JUNKYARD...?
IN PANGEA THIS AREA ISN'T A JUNKYARD, BUT A POWER SPOT. CAN YOU FEEL IT?
I FEEL COLD...AND LIKE I'M ABOUT TO BURST.
YES. I ALSO FEEL COLD AND EMPTY IN THIS PLACE...
NO, I'M FREEZING AND I HAVE TO PEE.
OH.
I CHOSE THIS SPOT TO REBUILD THE WORLD I CAME FROM, PANGEA.
COME, SARA. WE MUST TRAVEL AS CHILDREN UPON OUR HANDS AND KNEES THROUGH THE CASTLE OF QUILTS.
AND THAT'S WHERE WE'LL FIND STEVE?
THERE YOU WILL SEE THE FIRST FOUR, WHO WERE SENT BEFORE ME TO STOP IAGO. BUT ALL FAILED.
WHEN YOU LOOK UPON THEIR FACES, YOU WILL REMEMBER THEM, AND WILL RETURN TO PANGEA.
THUNDERPIG! LOOK OUT! SARA, DUCK!
WHAT?! I DON'T SEE--
WHUMP
WE'LL BE SAFE DOWN HERE. THUNDERPIGS ARE FOOLISH AND AFRAID. THEY WILL NOT JUMP DOWN A HOLE IF THEY DO NOT KNOW WHERE IT LEADS.
UNLIKE US.


SARA, ARE YOU ALL RIGHT?
I THINK SO... BUT I CAN'T SEE A THING! HOW DO WE FIND STEVE? IS HE HURT BAD?
FOLLOW ME, IT'S OOOF! WATCH THAT FIRST--
OOOF! THANKS FOR THE WARNING. ANYWAY, WHAT'S THIS PLACE YOU COME FROM LIKE? DO THE WHALES FLOAT IN THE AIR?
DON'T BE RIDICULOUS, OF COURSE NOT. EVERYONE KNOWS THAT WHALES PUSH THROUGH THE EARTH, NOT THE AIR.
WOW, AN "EARTH WHALE". COOL.
OKAY, SO WHAT ELSE GOES ON THERE?
WHUMP
I THOUGHT YOU DIDN'T BELIEVE IN ANOTHER WORLD?
LOOK, MAXX, I WON'T LIE...I'D LOVE TO BE STEVE, YOU, OR MY OLD FRIENDS DAVE AND JULIE AND PRETEND THERE'S ANOTHER WORLD.
BUT I HAVE A SERIES OF BELIEFS. I DON'T WANT TO BELIEVE THEM--I HAVE TO. IF THEY'RE NOT TRUE, THEN THE WHOLE WORLD MEANS NOTHING.
OKAY, SARA...WHAT DO YOU BELIEVE?
I DON'T BELIEVE THAT THERE'S ANOTHER WORLD, OR THAT PEOPLE CAN MOVE THINGS WITH THEIR MINDS, OR THAT MY MOM'S GOING TO RECOVER FROM CANCER OVERNIGHT JUST TO MAKE ME FEEL BETTER--OR THAT MY DAD'S JUST A SWELL GUY WHO'S MISUNDERSTOOD.
THE PRINCESS IN HER QUILT CASTLE COULD MOVE THINGS WITH HER MIND. HER LEFT HAND WOULD START TO GLOW AND...
BESIDES, EVEN IF YOU COULD MOVE A GLASS OF WATER WITH YOUR MIND, YOU'D STILL BE THE SAME SCREWED-UP PERSON YOU WERE BEFORE, RIGHT?
MAXX, WILL YOU SHUT UP!
SORRY.

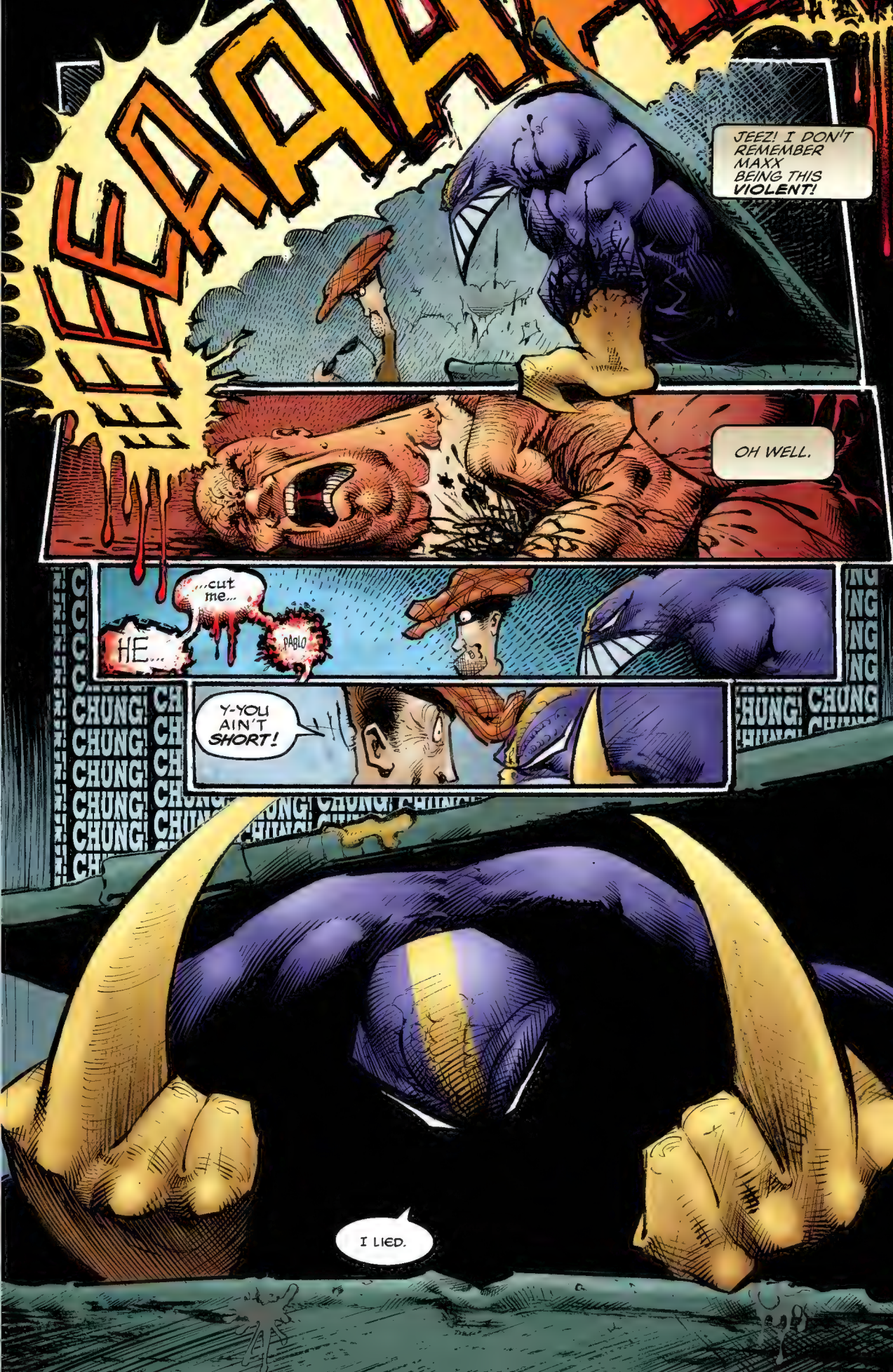
KEEP GOING, WE'RE ALMOST THERE! CAN YOU FEEL THE MAGIC, MY PRINCESS?
OH, YEAH. CRAWLING ON MY HANDS AND KNEES THROUGH GARBAGE ALWAYS MAKES ME FEEL MAGICAL.
A CYNICAL ATTITUDE MASKS A BROKEN HEART.
DEEP.
NOW YOU'RE SURE HE'S RIGHT HERE, MAXX? WAIT-- I THINK I SEE THE OPENING...
YOU'VE MADE IT, MY PRINCESS. YOU'RE IN PANGEA!
I DON'T BELIEVE IT. MY CHILDHOOD TOYS. I HAVEN'T SEEN THEM SINCE I WAS A LITTLE GIRL!
PUMPKIN!
MR. YAKITY-TAKITY!
AND MR. DIAL-A-DOODLE!
POOCHIE!
THEY'RE REAL--
--AND THEY'RE HUGE!
PUMP

HEY WAAAIIT A MINUTE! I MUST BE LOSING MY MARBLES!
SARA, WAIT! YOU'RE SLIPPING BACK!
IT'S JUST JUNK! A CHEESY STONEHENGE BUILT TO LOOK LIKE MY OLD TOYS!
BUT WHY, NORBERT? AND WHERE THE HELL IS STEVE?
YOU DON'T EVEN KNOW WHERE STEVE IS, DO YOU? HE'S PROBABLY OUT BOOZING IT UP WITH SKYE.
BOY, AM I A SUCKER.

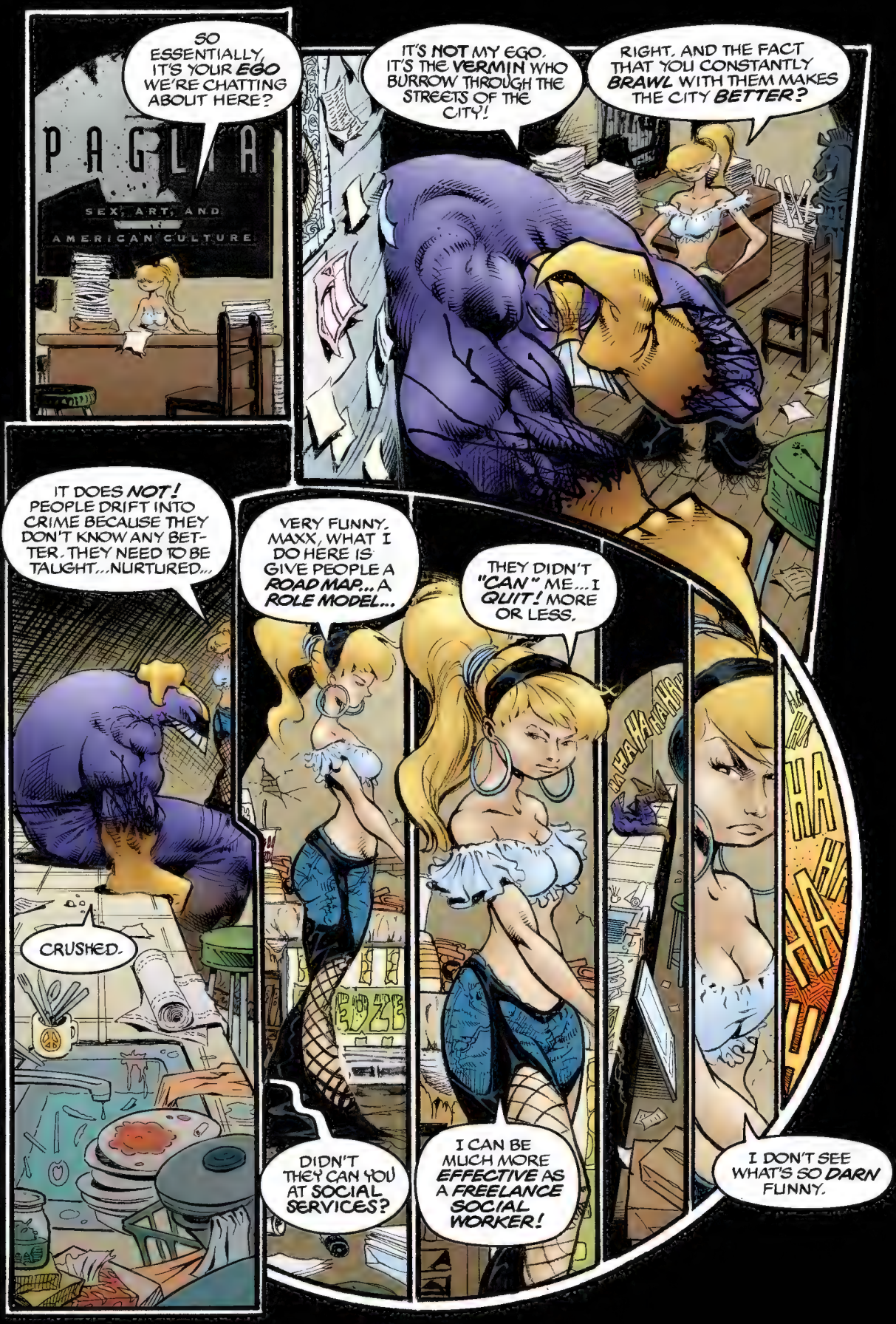
THIS IS WHAT I GET FOR LETTING ANOTHER LOONEY INTO MY LIFE! DAMN IT, NORBERT!
I'VE FAILED. THE FOUR YOU MENTIONED WERE SENT HERE FROM PANGEA TO STOP IAGO...BUT WERE SLAIN. I BUILT THESE MONUMENTS IN THEIR MEMORY--AND I HOPED THAT SEEING THEM WOULD HELP YOU REMEMBER.
BONK
UH-OH. SARA, WATCH OUT--
SARA? SARA? WAKE UP!
HUMP
SHUT UP, NORBERT. I'M TRYING TO GET SOME SLEEP.
NOW WHERE WAS I? OH YEAH...
AMAZING DREAM of MAXX & JULIE


MAXX
I CAN'T BELIEVE IN OTHER WORLDS.
IT SEEMS LIKE EVERYTHING I USED TO BELIEVE IS JUST FALLING APART...LIKE IT WAS ALL A DREAM. MOM'S CANCER, DAD'S CRIMES, MAXX AND JULIE LEAVING...LIKE IT WAS ALL JUST A BAD DREAM.
I MISS MAXX.
MAXX WAS REAL, I MEAN I THINK HE WAS REAL...

...I MEAN I KNOW HE WASN'T REAL... BUT I BELIEVED IN HIM ANYWAY. I MEAN...
MUSTARD
CHUNK CHUNK CHUNK CHUNK
LOOKY, WUGS. THERE'S S'POSE T'BE SOME OLD BUM WHO LIVES INNA DUMPSTER HERE.
D'WE GET T'BURN HIM, HUH? DO WE, PABLO? HUH? HUH?
MUNCH MUNCH MUNCH
M'BBEE.
GO 'WAY. I'M WEAK AND DEFENSELESS! I'M JUST A SHORT, LI'L GUY.
SHORT, HUH? YOU GOT ENNY FOOD IN THERE? ENNY MONEY? I GOTTA MATCH OUT HERE WI' Y'R NAME ON IT!
SQUIRT!
YEAH, I'M SHORT...
BUT I C'N REACH YOU!
AAAAAAAEEEEE
CHUNK CHUNK CHUNK

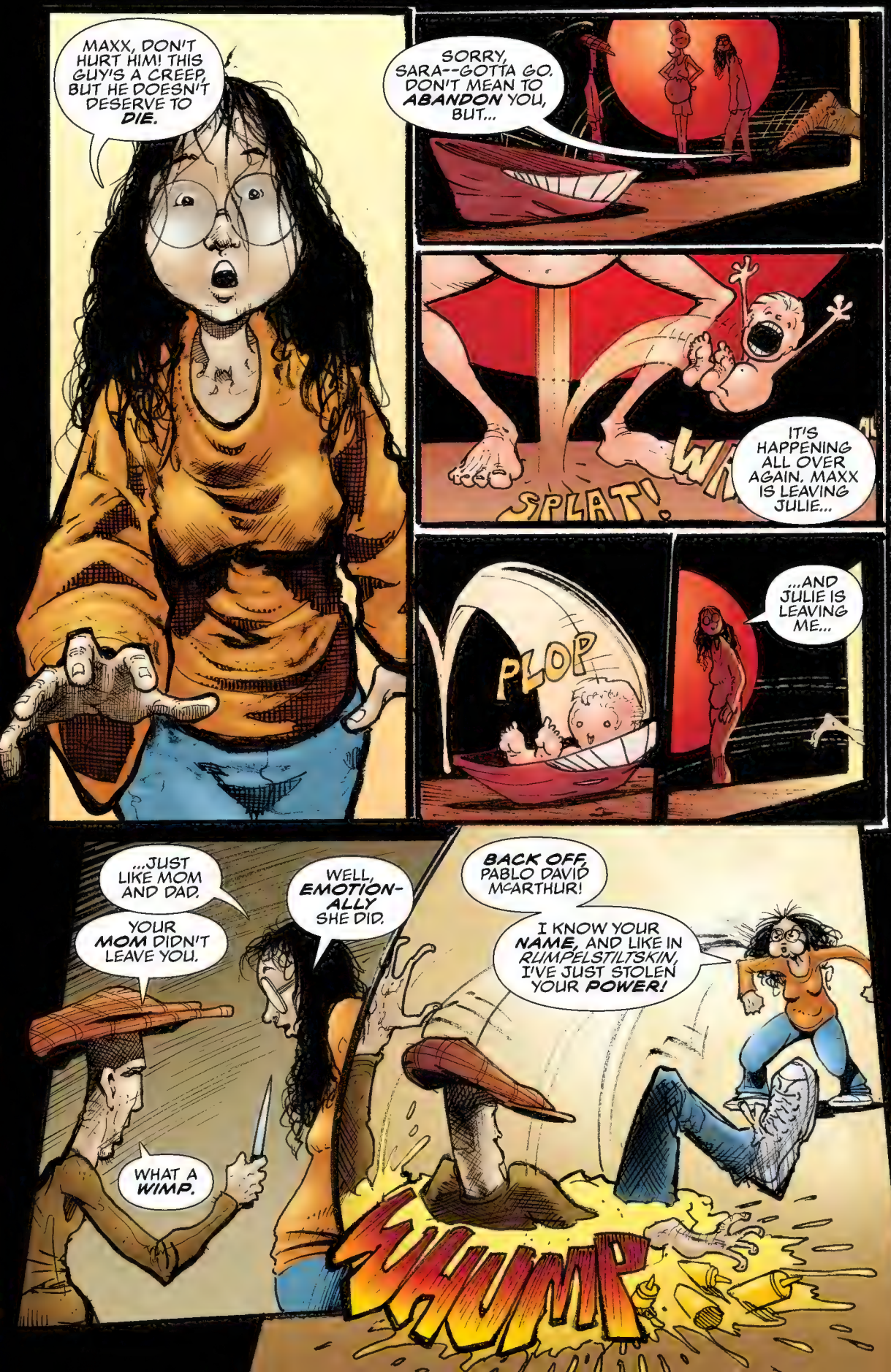

SLASH
JEEZ! I DON'T REMEMBER MAXX BEING THIS VIOLENT!
OH WELL.
....cut me...
HE...
PABLO
Y-YOU AIN'T SHORT!
CHUNG!
I LIED.

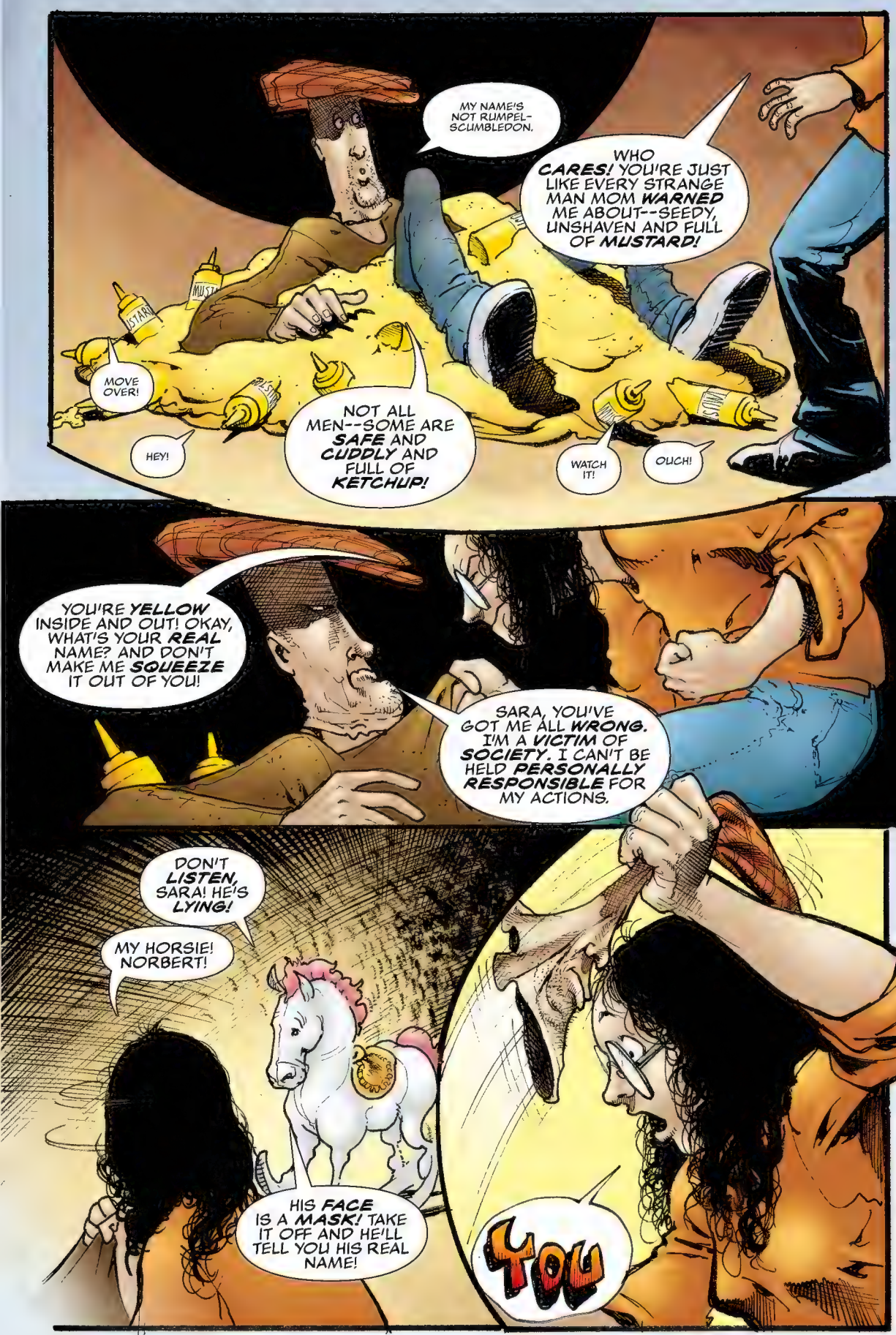
YOU AIN'T GETTIN' ME!
SPLAT!
NOBODY GETS PABLO McARTHUR!
WHAM WHAM WHAM WHAM WHAM WHAM
GOTTA GET AWAY! GOTTA GET HELP!
BOY, THAT MUST'VE HURT!
BUT WHAT WAS WORSE...
...WAS THE HUMILIATION!
THE CITY'S HERO.
BEATEN BY ONE GUY.
WITH A GARBAGE CAN LID!
NOW THAT'S THE MAXX I REMEMBER!


SO ESSENTIALLY, IT'S YOUR EGO WE'RE CHATTING ABOUT HERE?
PAGLIA
SEX, ART, AND AMERICAN CULTURE
IT'S NOT MY EGO, IT'S THE VERMIN WHO BURROW THROUGH THE STREETS OF THE CITY!
RIGHT, AND THE FACT THAT YOU CONSTANTLY BRAWL WITH THEM MAKES THE CITY BETTER?
IT DOES NOT! PEOPLE DRIFT INTO CRIME BECAUSE THEY DON'T KNOW ANY BETTER. THEY NEED TO BE TAUGHT... NURTURED...
VERY FUNNY, MAXX, WHAT I DO HERE IS GIVE PEOPLE A ROAD MAP... A ROLE MODEL...
THEY DIDN'T "CAN" ME... I QUIT! MORE OR LESS.
HA HA HA
CRUSHED.
DIDN'T THEY CAN YOU AT SOCIAL SERVICES?
I CAN BE MUCH MORE EFFECTIVE AS A FREELANCE SOCIAL WORKER!
I DON'T SEE WHAT'S SO DARN FUNNY.

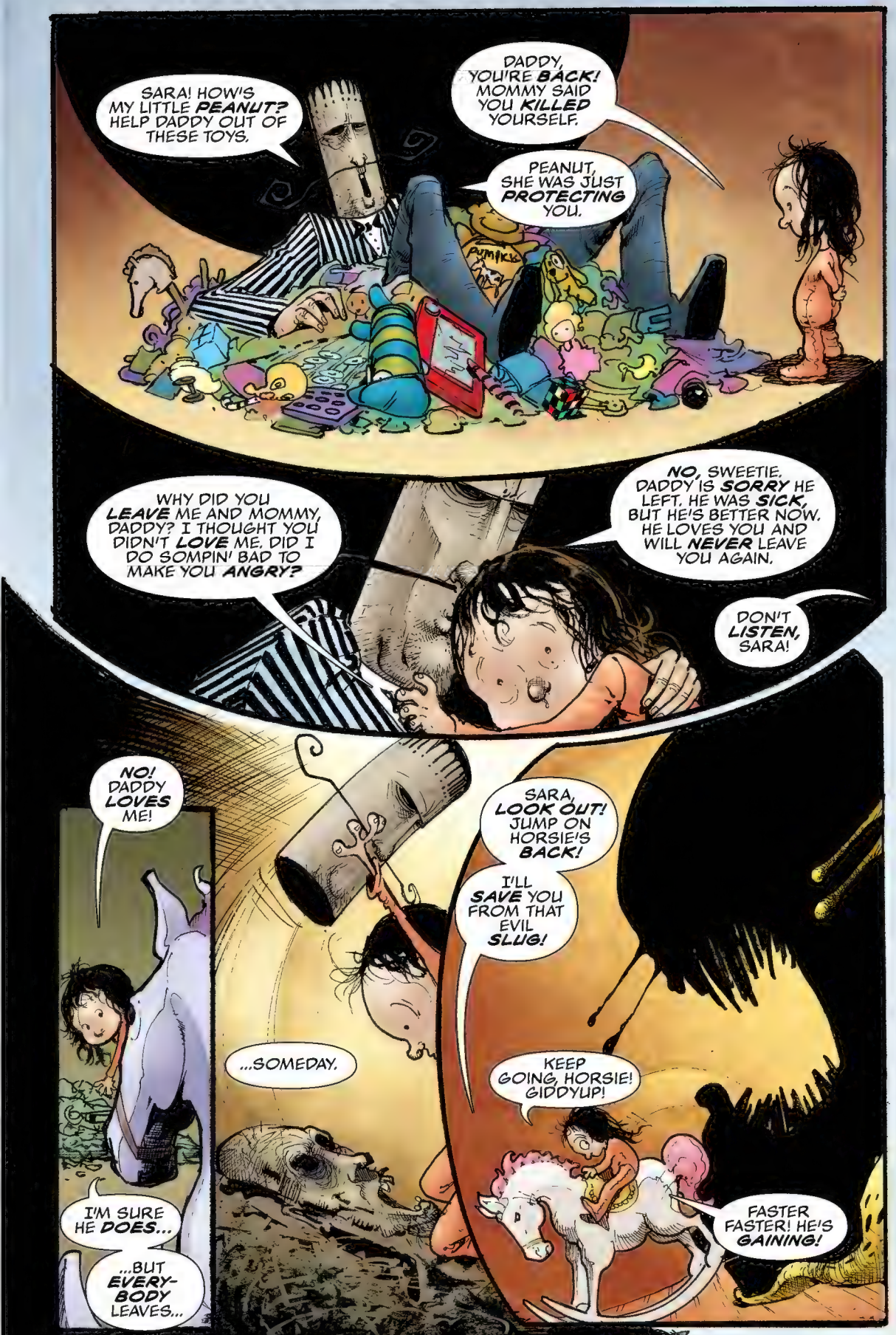
SO YOU HADDA JOB MOST PEOPLE'D RATHER EAT GROUND GLASS THAN DO... AND YOU QUIT SO YOU C'D DO IT FREE?
AND YOU THINK I'M NUTS?
WUMP!
I THINK YOU'RE A MAN WHO SEES AIR-WHALES. THERE'S A NEW COPY OF PSYCHOLOGY TODAY IN THERE. ENJOY.
I'LL BE OUT HERE HELPING PEOPLE!
Umm. HI. I CAME TO GET FOOD STAMPS... WELFARE... ADC...
FINE. GOOD. AND YOUR NAME IS PABLO, RIGHT?
McARTHUR. PABLO DAVID McARTHUR.
SEE, I JUST HAD LIKE A BUSINESS REVERSE. MY PARTNER...TOOK SICK.
Uh-huh. I'D LIKE TO ASK YOU A FEW QUESTIONS TO TEST YOUR COPING SKILLS...
IF YOU WERE LOST IN A STRANGE AIR-PORT, WHAT WOULD YOU DO FIRST?
WELL, FIRST I'D SEE HOW MUCH OF IT WOULD BURN...

LOOK OUT, JULIE! HE HAS MUSTARD AND HE KNOWS HOW TO USE IT!
YOU CAN'T HIDE FROM ME, PABLO!
YOU CAN'T TOUCH ME, I'M IN A SOCIAL WORKER'S OFFICE.
OKAY, MAYBE YOU CAN, BUT THAT DOESN'T MAKE IT RIGHT.
EVERYBODY FREEZE!


MAXX, DON'T HURT HIM! THIS GUY'S A CREEP, BUT HE DOESN'T DESERVE TO DIE.
SORRY, SARA--GOTTA GO. DON'T MEAN TO ABANDON YOU, BUT...
SPLAT!
IT'S HAPPENING ALL OVER AGAIN. MAXX IS LEAVING JULIE...
PLOP
...AND JULIE IS LEAVING ME...
...JUST LIKE MOM AND DAD.
YOUR MOM DIDN'T LEAVE YOU.
WELL, EMOTIONALLY SHE DID.
WHAT A WIMP.
BACK OFF, PABLO DAVID McARTHUR!
I KNOW YOUR NAME, AND LIKE IN RUMPELSTILTSKIN, I'VE JUST STOLEN YOUR POWER!
WHUMP


MY NAME'S NOT RUMPEL-SCUMBLEDON.
WHO CARES! YOU'RE JUST LIKE EVERY STRANGE MAN MOM WARNED ME ABOUT--SEEDY, UNSHAVEN AND FULL OF MUSTARD!
MUSTARD
MOVE OVER!
HEY!
NOT ALL MEN--SOME ARE SAFE AND CUDDLY AND FULL OF KETCHUP!
WATCH IT!
OUCH!
YOU'RE YELLOW INSIDE AND OUT! OKAY, WHAT'S YOUR REAL NAME? AND DON'T MAKE ME SQUEEZE IT OUT OF YOU!
SARA, YOU'VE GOT ME ALL WRONG. I'M A VICTIM OF SOCIETY. I CAN'T BE HELD PERSONALLY RESPONSIBLE FOR MY ACTIONS.
DON'T LISTEN, SARA! HE'S LYING!
MY HORSIE! NORBERT!
HIS FACE IS A MASK! TAKE IT OFF AND HE'LL TELL YOU HIS REAL NAME!
YOU

I FORGIVE YOU, MR. GONE.
I DON'T.
I DO.
I SEE IT YOUR WAY, BUT I'M STILL PRETTY PISSED OFF.
I WANT YOU TO ROT IN HELL, YOU PATHETIC WORM.
GEE, SARA... MY OWN VICTIMS CAN'T DECIDE AMONG THEMSELVES WHETHER TO FORGIVE ME OR NOT.
THE IRONY IS, THERE'S ONLY ONE PERSON I WANT FORGIVENESS FROM. BUT MY DEFENSES ARE TOO STRONG. I'M NOT ABOUT TO ADMIT VULNERABILITY WHILE I'M MR. GONE. YOU WOULDN'T BELIEVE IT.
DON'T STOP HERE, SARA, KEEP GOING! PEEL BACK ANOTHER LAYER!
HIS FACE IS ANOTHER MASK!
DADDY?


SARA! HOW'S MY LITTLE PEANUT? HELP DADDY OUT OF THESE TOYS.
DADDY, YOU'RE BACK! MOMMY SAID YOU KILLED YOURSELF.
PEANUT, SHE WAS JUST PROTECTING YOU.
WHY DID YOU LEAVE ME AND MOMMY, DADDY? I THOUGHT YOU DIDN'T LOVE ME. DID I DO SOMPIN' BAD TO MAKE YOU ANGRY?
NO, SWEETIE. DADDY IS SORRY HE LEFT. HE WAS SICK, BUT HE'S BETTER NOW. HE LOVES YOU AND WILL NEVER LEAVE YOU AGAIN.
DON'T LISTEN, SARA!
NO! DADDY LOVES ME!
I'M SURE HE DOES...
...BUT EVERY-BODY LEAVES...
...SOMEDAY.
SARA, LOOK OUT! JUMP ON HORSIE'S BACK!
I'LL SAVE YOU FROM THAT EVIL SLUG!
KEEP GOING, HORSIE! GIDDYUP!
FASTER FASTER! HE'S GAINING!

DON'T STOP...HORSIE... KEEP GOING...
HUH? WHAT A FREAKY NIGHTMARE!
WELL...*THIS* IS KIND OF AWKWARD. AT LEAST ME AND NORBERT ARE THE ONLY ONES HERE...
SARA! YOU'RE *AWAKE!* FINALLY!
WHAT HAPPENED?
LISTEN-- IT'S NONE OF MY *BUSINESS*, BUT DON'T YOU THINK IT'S KIND OF *DANGEROUS* TO GO OUT IN THE MIDDLE OF THE NIGHT TO A *JUNKYARD* AND GET HIT ON THE *HEAD?*
WE WERE LOOKING FOR *YOU*, YOU IDIOT.
ANYWAY, THAT GUY BROUGHT YOU HERE IN THE RAIN AND PROBABLY *SAVED* YOUR *LIFE.*
I GUESS HE'S 0-FOR-2 BETWEEN THE TWO OF US.
YEAH. I GUESS SO...

LISTEN, YOUR MOM CALLED. SHE WAS PRETTY GROGGY FROM PAIN KILLERS...
...BUT SHE SAID YOUR GRANDDAD WAS BURIED, NOT CREMATED!
SO WHAT'S YOUR DAD UP TO, LYING ABOUT THE URN?
I KNEW THERE WAS SOMETHING PSYCHIC GOING ON WITH THAT THING...
SNORT SNORT
...WISH I COULD GET THE LID OFF...MAYBE WITH MY MIND.

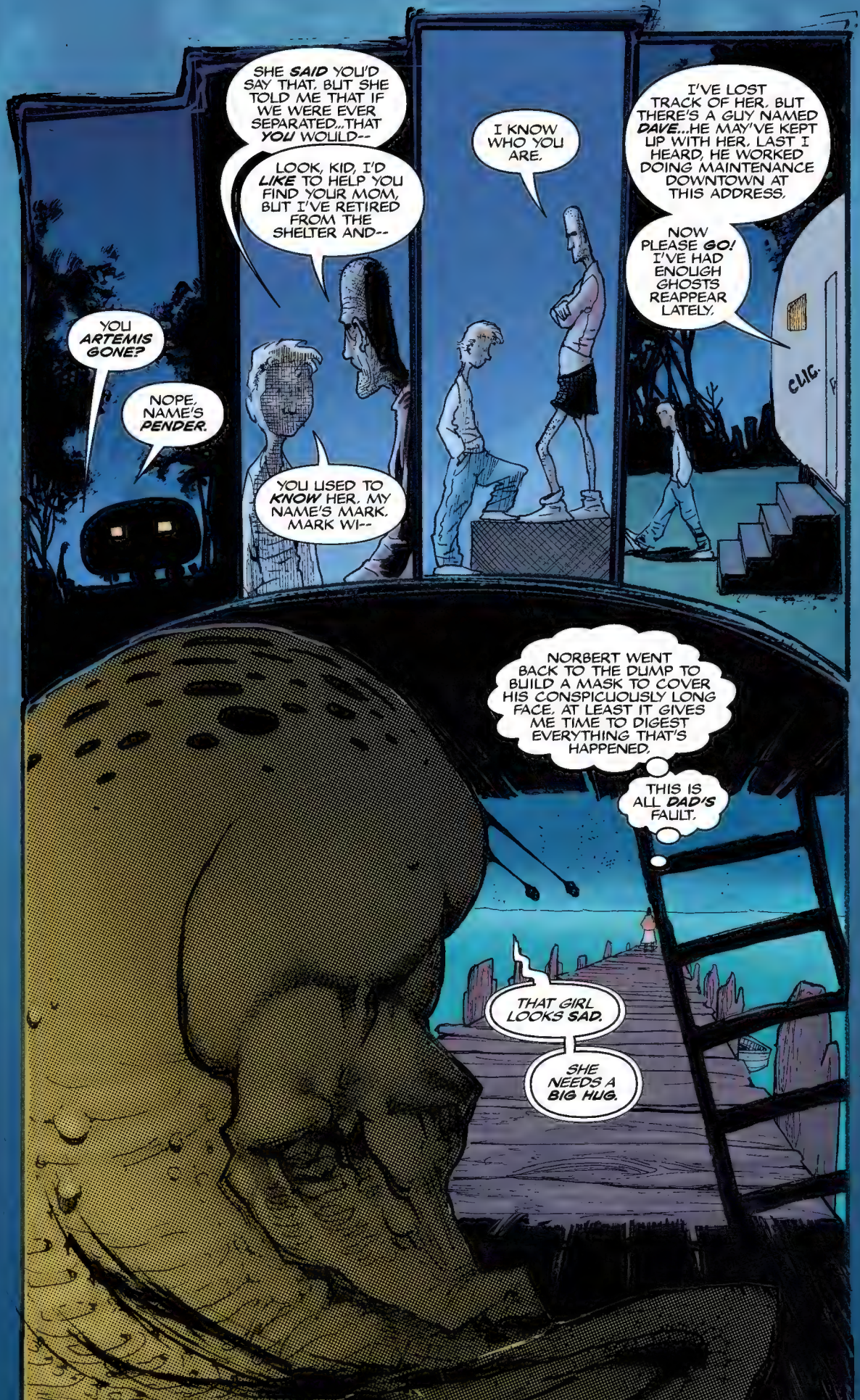
THIS ISN'T HAPPENING. EVEN IF THERE WAS A HORSIE UNDER THIS BLANKET AND I COULD MOVE THINGS WITH MY MIND, I'M STILL THE SAME OLD SCREWED-UP SARA, RIGHT?
IT DOESN'T MEAN EVERY-THING I BELIEVE IS CRAP.
OF COURSE NOT. THEN WHY AM I STILL SHAKING?
SARA, COME WITH ME TO THE PIER. I'LL PROVE IAGO EXISTS.
WELL...
YEAH, LET'S GO TO THE PIER!
AND SO...
A SKIRT? I DON'T THINK I'VE EVER SEEN HER IN A SKIRT...
ME EITHER. INTERESTING...
WILL YOU TWO KNOCK IT OFF! EVERYTHING ELSE IS DIRTY!
I DON'T WANT IT IN THE HOUSE. GOD KNOWS WHAT'S IN IT.
WHY'D YOU BRING THE URN?

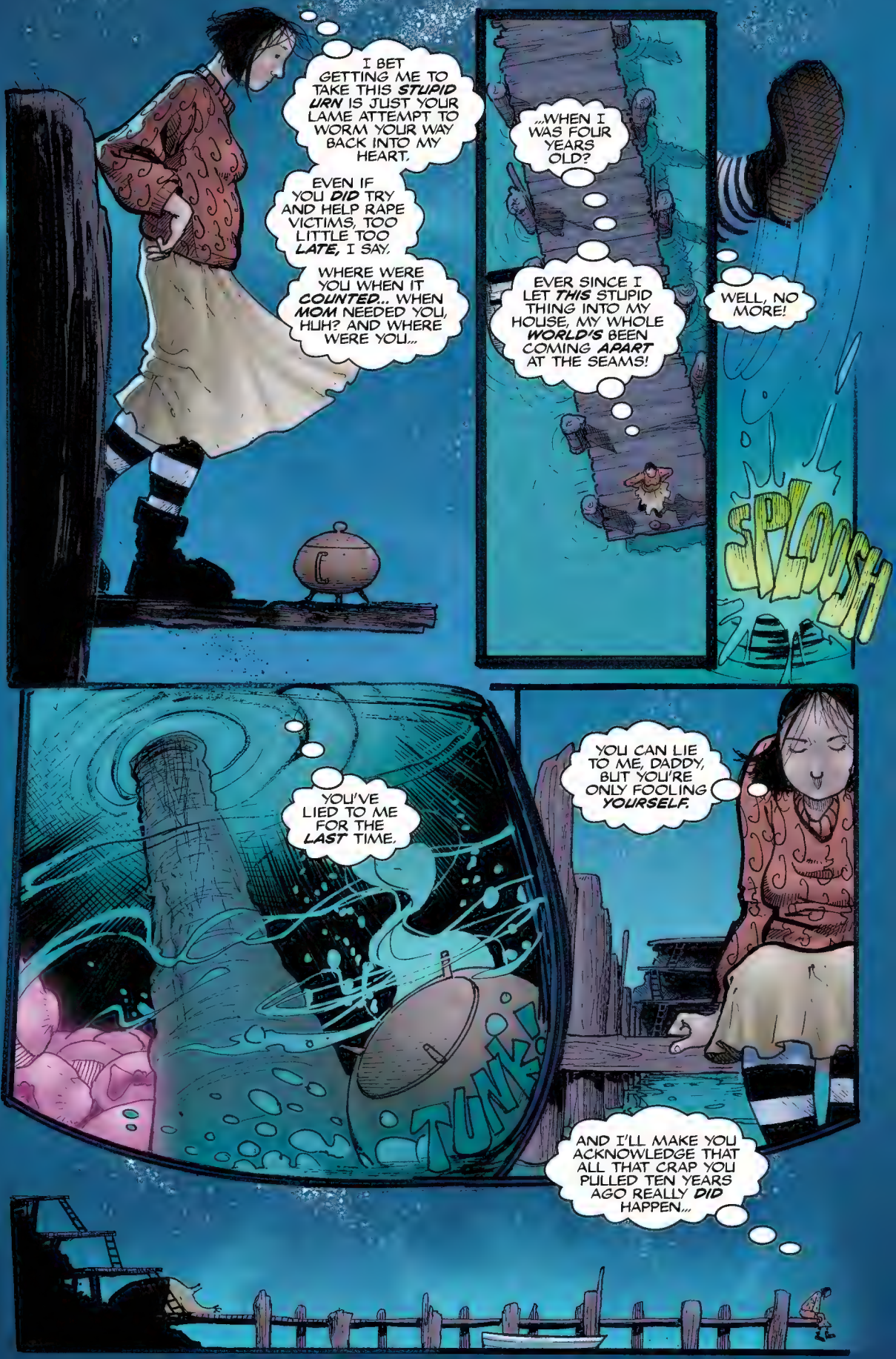
SO, NORBERT, YOU SAY YOU'RE ACTUALLY A "PART OF SARA'S PSYCHE" THAT CAME INTO OUR WORLD TO STOP A KILLER SLUG?
AND SARA'S A PRINCESS WHO MOVES THINGS WITH HER MAGIC HAND?
I WOULDN'T POINT FINGERS, STEVE.
LOOK, I KNOW YOU SEE ME OUT THERE EXPLORING PSYCHIC PHENOMENA, AND YOU GUYS WANT IN ON IT TOO. BUT YOU GOTTA UNDERSTAND I'M A TRAINED PROFESSIONAL. YOU GUYS ARE GONNA NEED MY HELP.
SO WHAT'S YOUR ADVICE?
LET'S CALL IT A NIGHT AND GO HOME FOR CEREAL AND PIZZA. WE NEED TO REPLENISH OUR PSYCHIC ENERGY.
STEVE, YOU'RE FIRED.
LOOK, THE TRUTH IS, YOU GUYS DON'T EVEN HAVE PSYCHIC ABILITIES! I'M THE ONE WHO DESERVES ESP AND MIND POWER. WHY DOES THIS ALWAYS HAVE TO BE ABOUT YOU, SARA? I'M THE ONE WHO'S STUDIED--
LOOK, STEVE, I CAN'T HELP IT IF I'VE GOT A GUY WHO FOLLOWS ME AROUND THINKING I'M MORE PSYCHIC THAN YOU-- I'M SORRY, BUT DEAL WITH IT! IF I BELIEVED FOR A MINUTE THAT I REALLY DID HAVE MAGIC POWERS I'D GIVE THEM TO YOU RIGHT NOW, OKAY?! HAPPY?
STEVE, WAIT--AW, GEEZ...

SARA... ARE YOU... OKAY?
NO.
IT'S TIME, SARA. LOOK AT ME, PLEASE.
WHY DON'T YOU LOOK?
I DON'T HAVE TO... PUT IT BACK ON.
SO YOU BELIEVE. YOU'LL HELP ME STOP IAGO?
SARA...?

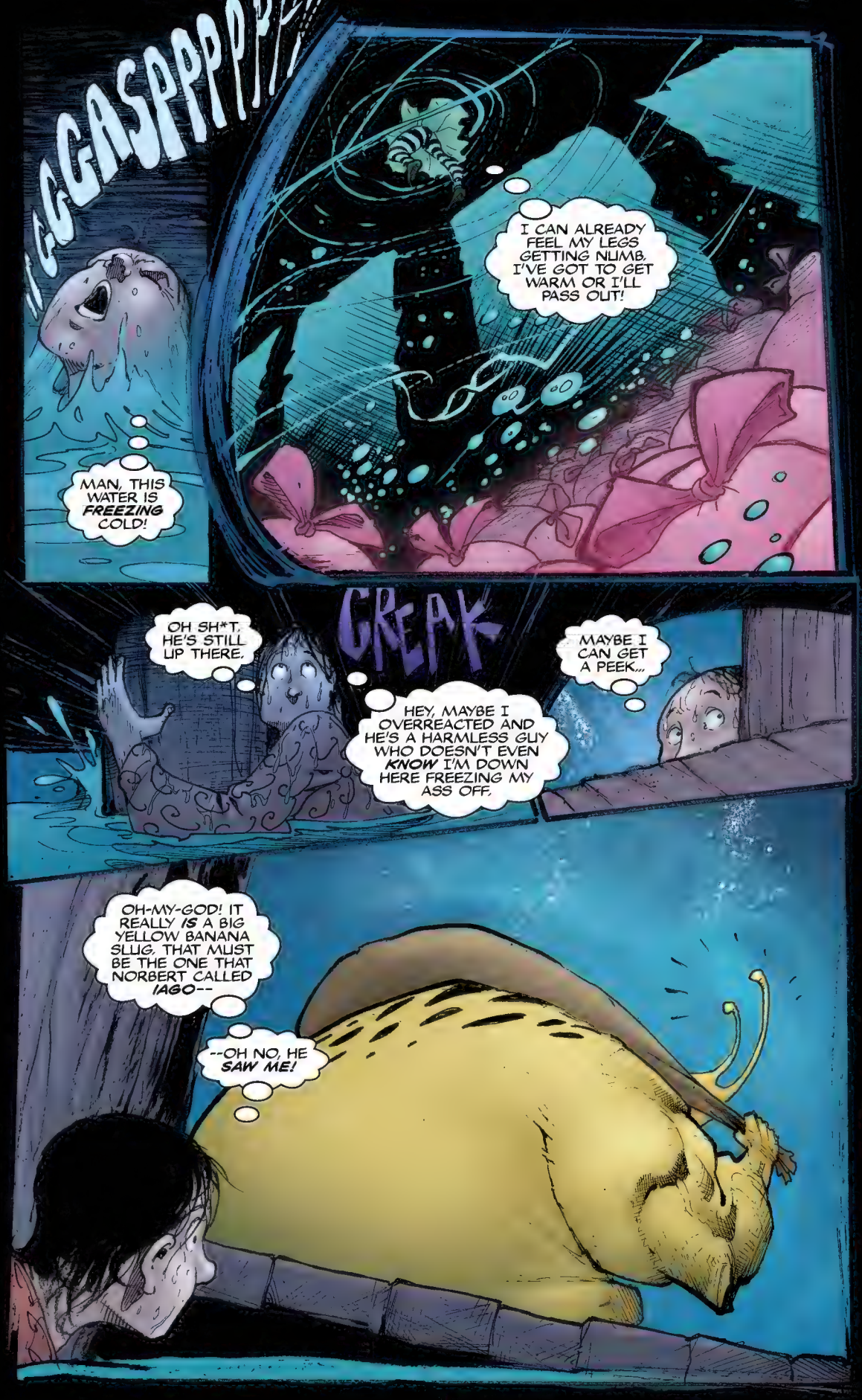
Chapter Six

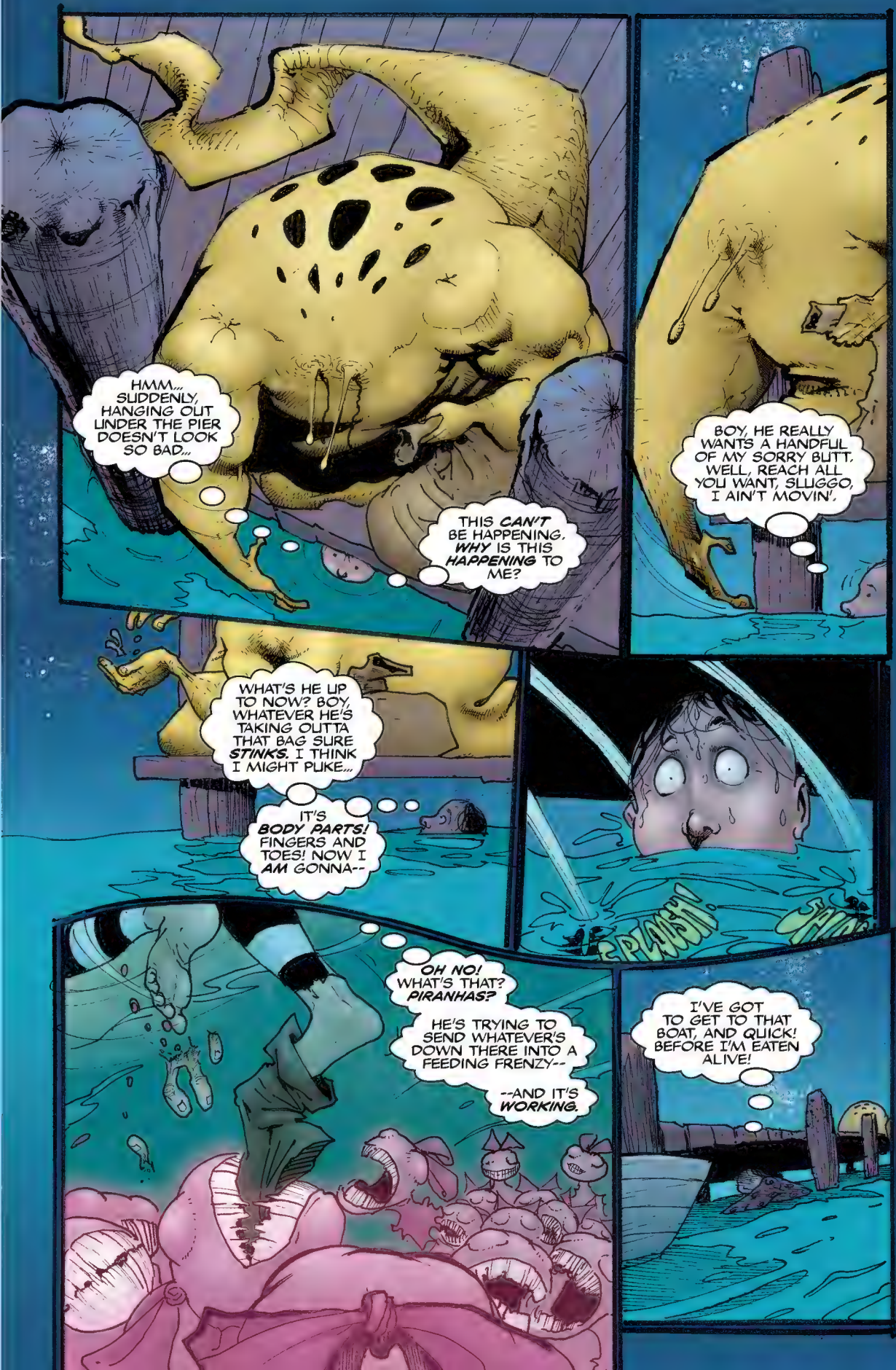
THE MAW


YOU ARTEMIS GONE?
NOPE, NAME'S PENDER.
SHE SAID YOU'D SAY THAT, BUT SHE TOLD ME THAT IF WE WERE EVER SEPARATED,,THAT YOU WOULD--
LOOK, KID, I'D LIKE TO HELP YOU FIND YOUR MOM, BUT I'VE RETIRED FROM THE SHELTER AND--
YOU USED TO KNOW HER. MY NAME'S MARK. MARK WI--
I KNOW WHO YOU ARE.
I'VE LOST TRACK OF HER, BUT THERE'S A GUY NAMED DAVE...HE MAY'VE KEPT UP WITH HER, LAST I HEARD, HE WORKED DOING MAINTENANCE DOWNTOWN AT THIS ADDRESS.
NOW PLEASE GO! I'VE HAD ENOUGH GHOSTS REAPPEAR LATELY.
CLIC.
NORBERT WENT BACK TO THE DUMP TO BUILD A MASK TO COVER HIS CONSPICUOUSLY LONG FACE. AT LEAST IT GIVES ME TIME TO DIGEST EVERYTHING THAT'S HAPPENED.
THIS IS ALL DAD'S FAULT.
THAT GIRL LOOKS SAD.
SHE NEEDS A BIG HUG.


I BET GETTING ME TO TAKE THIS STUPID URN IS JUST YOUR LAME ATTEMPT TO WORM YOUR WAY BACK INTO MY HEART.
EVEN IF YOU DID TRY AND HELP RAPE VICTIMS, TOO LITTLE TOO LATE, I SAY.
WHERE WERE YOU WHEN IT COUNTED... WHEN MOM NEEDED YOU, HUH? AND WHERE WERE YOU...
...WHEN I WAS FOUR YEARS OLD?
EVER SINCE I LET THIS STUPID THING INTO MY HOUSE, MY WHOLE WORLD'S BEEN COMING APART AT THE SEAMS!
WELL, NO MORE!
SPLOOSH
YOU'VE LIED TO ME FOR THE LAST TIME.
TUNK!
YOU CAN LIE TO ME, DADDY, BUT YOU'RE ONLY FOOLING YOURSELF.
AND I'LL MAKE YOU ACKNOWLEDGE THAT ALL THAT CRAP YOU PULLED TEN YEARS AGO REALLY DID HAPPEN...

...IF IT'S THE LAST THING I DO.
CREAK
SOMEBODY'S OUT HERE THIS LATE?
CREAK
OH, GREAT. SOME CREEP BLOCKING MY WAY BACK.
CREAK
HE DOESN'T SEEM TO HAVE SEEN ME...
OH CRAP!
CAN'T BREATHE!
DON'T PANIC!
CAN'T BREATHE!


GGASPPPP!!
I CAN ALREADY FEEL MY LEGS GETTING NUMB. I'VE GOT TO GET WARM OR I'LL PASS OUT!
MAN, THIS WATER IS FREEZING COLD!
CREAK
OH SH*T. HE'S STILL UP THERE.
HEY, MAYBE I OVERREACTED AND HE'S A HARMLESS GUY WHO DOESN'T EVEN KNOW I'M DOWN HERE FREEZING MY ASS OFF.
MAYBE I CAN GET A PEEK...
OH-MY-GOD! IT REALLY IS A BIG YELLOW BANANA SLUG. THAT MUST BE THE ONE THAT NORBERT CALLED IAGO--
--OH NO, HE SAW ME!


HMM... SUDDENLY, HANGING OUT UNDER THE PIER DOESN'T LOOK SO BAD...
THIS CAN'T BE HAPPENING. WHY IS THIS HAPPENING TO ME?
BOY, HE REALLY WANTS A HANDFUL OF MY SORRY BUTT. WELL, REACH ALL YOU WANT, SLUGGO, I AIN'T MOVIN'.
WHAT'S HE UP TO NOW? BOY, WHATEVER HE'S TAKING OUTTA THAT BAG SURE STINKS. I THINK I MIGHT PUKE...
IT'S BODY PARTS! FINGERS AND TOES! NOW I AM GONNA--
PLOP!
OH NO! WHAT'S THAT? PIRANHAS?
HE'S TRYING TO SEND WHATEVER'S DOWN THERE INTO A FEEDING FRENZY--
--AND IT'S WORKING.
I'VE GOT TO GET TO THAT BOAT, AND QUICK! BEFORE I'M EATEN ALIVE!

♫ DON'T RUN AWAY FROM YOUR FEELINGS, LITTLE GIRL... ♫
C'MON, SARA, HURRY! HURRY! GOTTA GET THIS THING UNDER THE PIER BEFORE...
THAT'S IT...
...KEEP GOING...
THERE!! SCREW YOU, BUDDY!
NOW IF I CAN STOP SHAKING, MAYBE I CAN CATCH MY BREATH AND THINK!
MY BEST BET IS TO KEEP THIS PIER BETWEEN ME AND HIM, AND SLOWLY WORK MY WAY BACK TO SHORE. THAT SHOULD WORK.
...YOU CAN "LOOKIE"...
THAT'S RIGHT, BUDDY...

...BUT NO "TOUCHIE",
MAN, THIS DUDE WON'T GIVE UP!
OKAY, LET'S SEE HOW YOU LIKE BEING PUSHED INTO A CORNER!
GRUNH
SO YOU DON'T LIKE IT EITHER, HUH?
I'D BETTER LET GO BEFORE YOU TRASH THE WHOLE PIER!
DON'T LOSE IT, SARA.
IGNORE THE CRAMPED SPACE.
IGNORE THE PIRANHAS.
JUST KEEP GOING TOWARD SHORE.

I THINK I'M GETTING LOOPY. HOW DO I GET MYSELF INTO THESE THINGS?
I WISH I WAS WITH STEVE, BACK HOME, OR EVEN WITH NORBERT, AT THE DUMP. ANYWHERE BUT... BUT...
OH-- LOOKIE, PRETTY MOONLIGHT... THAT REMINDS ME OF--
DAMMIT! HERE WE GO AGAIN!
FINE, WHATEVER. TAKE THE STUPID SKIRT.
RRIIP!
HEY-- LEGGO O'MY--
OOOFFF!
OKAY--I WON'T FIT! HOW MANY TIMES DO I HAVE TO BE ROTATED BEFORE HE GETS IT?
...LEG.
OUCH! STOP TWISTING IT, YOU STUPID @#$%&$!!

FINALLY! BOY, IS THIS SLUG DENSE! MAYBE NOW HE'LL LEAVE ME ALONE!
I CAN'T KEEP GOING LIKE THIS--I FEEL LIKE I'M GOING TO CRACK UP.
YOU KNOW, IF I WAS A WEAKER PERSON, I MIGHT HAVE BURST INTO TEARS BY NOW.
BUT IT'S GOING TO TAKE A LOT MORE THAN THIS TO...
WHIR
WELL, IF HE THINKS THROWING BODY PARTS WILL DRIVE ME OUT OF THIS BOAT--FAT CHANCE!
UNDERNEATH... SOMETHING'S... TRYING TO...
SPURT!
OH MAN! THEY CAN SMELL THE FINGERS!
PLOP!

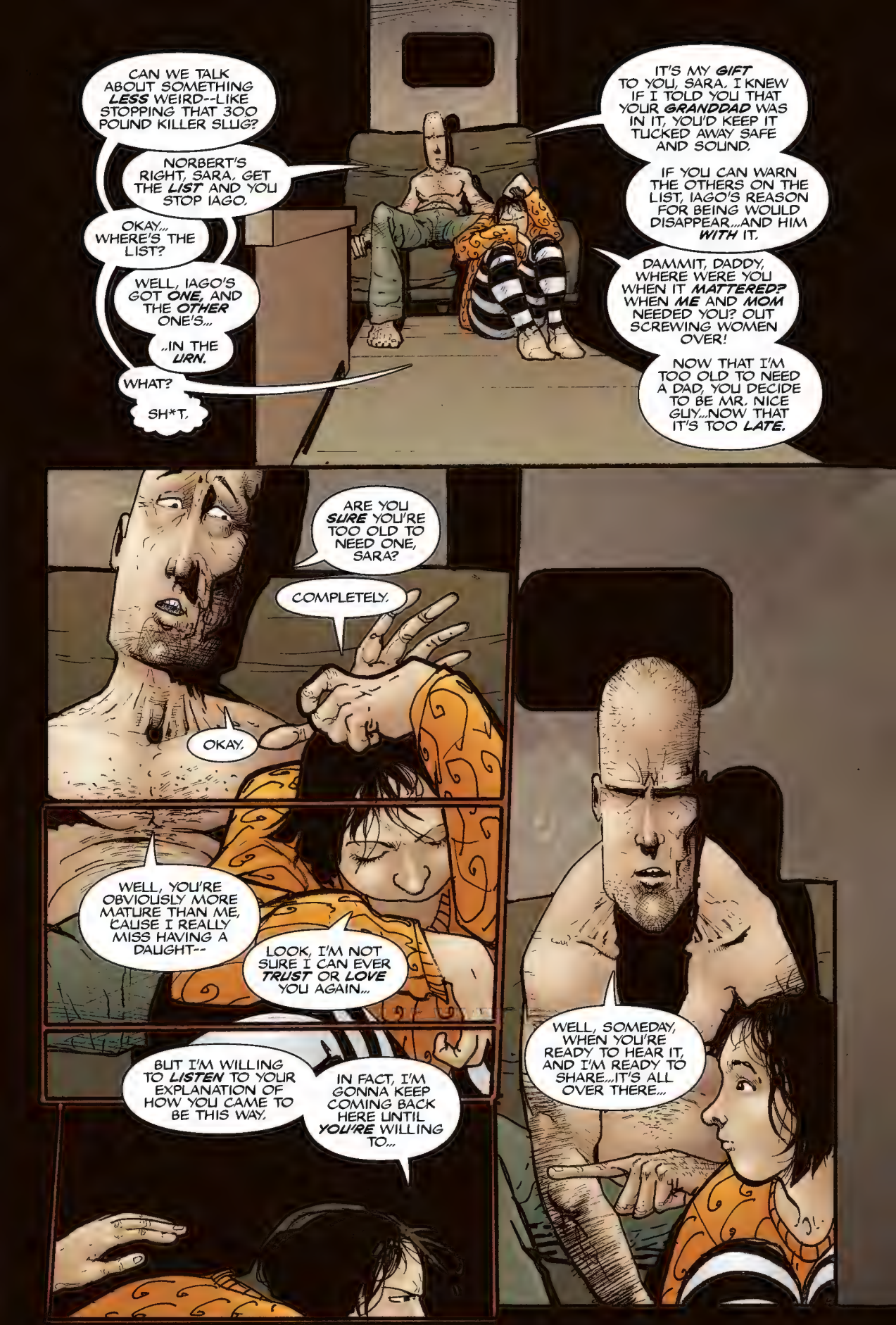
GREAT! NOW WATER'S LEAKING IN!
HE WANTS 'EM TO EAT RIGHT THROUGH THE BOAT, EH?
WELL, WE'LL JUST SEE ABOUT THAT...
THERE! HAVE YOUR FEEDING FRENZY OVER THERE!
BOY, THEY'RE STARVED! LOOK AT 'EM!
SPLOOSH!
HMM... SINCE WHEN DO PIRANHAS HAVE BOWS ON THEIR HEADS?
BOW
OKAY, THIS IS IT...
...IT'S OVER.
AWW, SCREW IT! HE WANTS A FIGHT?
HE'S GONNA GET ONE.
CRASH

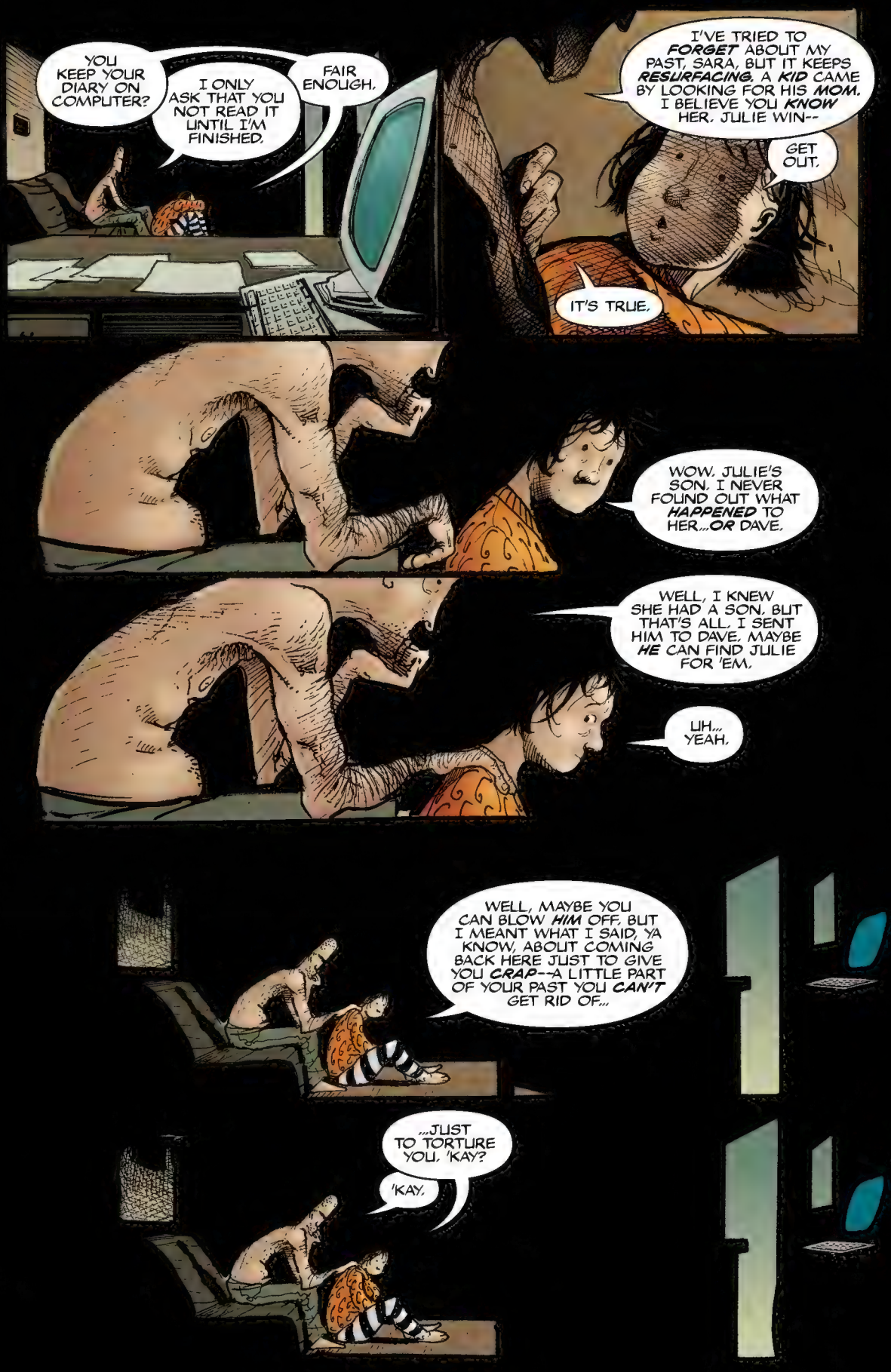
HOW BOUT A HUG?
C'MON, SUCKER, I'M READY...
?
?

OKAY, HERE'S MY CHANCE, WHILE HE'S HIDING...
...BUT WHAT'S UP WITH MY HAND? IT GLOWED?! AND I'M NOT EVEN DREAMING THIS TIME!
GOTCHA! IT WORKED! DIDN'T THINK I SAW YOU LOOKIN' AT ME, HUH?
TYING HIM IN A KNOT WON'T HOLD HIM FOR LONG...
...BUT MAYBE JUST...
...LONG ENOUGH...
PANT PANT PANT PANT PANT PANT PANT PANT
PANT PANT PANT PANT PANT PANT

SOMEBODY'S CRAAANKY...
GRAG
GO AHEAD, UNTIE YOURSELF...
...JUST STAY THE HELL AWAY FRO--
OOOFF!

OKAY, DADDY, I WANT THE TRUTH.
AND DON'T DENY KNOWLEDGE OF ALL THIS SUPERNATURAL CRAP. I SAW THE SLUG TONIGHT.
HOW DO WE STOP IT?
WHY'D YOU LIE ABOUT GRANDPA IN THE URN?
AND... WHAT'S UP WITH MY HAND GLOWING AND MOVING STUFF?
YOU'RE ALREADY MOVING THINGS? LIKE WHAT?
A PIER.
A WHOLE PIER?! YOU MOVED A WHOLE @%&#$%@ PIER?!
WELL... MORE LIKE "TRASHED"...
COOL.
LOOK, I DON'T BELIEVE IN THIS CRAP.
I CAN'T EXPLAIN IT... IF I'M EXPLODING PIERS, CHANCES ARE THAT YOU'RE BEHIND IT.
IT'S NOT MY DOING, HONEY. IT'S COMING FROM YOU. AND IT'S A POSITIVE FORCE, NOT EVIL. BELIEVE IT OR NOT, IT'S TIED TO THE MENSTRUAL CYCLE, AND IT'S BEEN OVERDUE IN YOUR DEVELOPMENT.
I GUESS THE STRESS BROUGHT IT ALL SPILLING OUT AT ONCE. BUT DON'T BE ASHAMED, SARA--IT'S BEAUTIFUL. MY LITTLE GIRL'S BECOME A WOMAN.
DON'T GET WEIRD ON ME, ARTIE. IT'S NOT LIKE I HAD MY FIRST PERIOD OR SOMETHING.


CAN WE TALK ABOUT SOMETHING *LESS* WEIRD--LIKE STOPPING THAT 300 POUND KILLER SLUG?
NORBERT'S RIGHT, SARA. GET THE *LIST* AND YOU STOP IAGO.
OKAY... WHERE'S THE LIST?
WELL, IAGO'S GOT *ONE*, AND THE *OTHER* ONE'S...
...IN THE *URN*.
WHAT?
SH*T.
IT'S MY *GIFT* TO YOU, SARA. I KNEW IF I TOLD YOU THAT YOUR *GRANDDAD* WAS IN IT, YOU'D KEEP IT TUCKED AWAY SAFE AND SOUND.
IF YOU CAN WARN THE OTHERS ON THE LIST, IAGO'S REASON FOR BEING WOULD DISAPPEAR...AND HIM *WITH* IT.
DAMMIT, DADDY, WHERE WERE YOU WHEN IT *MATTERED?* WHEN *ME* AND *MOM* NEEDED YOU? OUT SCREWING WOMEN OVER!
NOW THAT I'M TOO OLD TO NEED A DAD, YOU DECIDE TO BE MR. NICE GUY...NOW THAT IT'S TOO *LATE*.
ARE YOU *SURE* YOU'RE TOO OLD TO NEED ONE, SARA?
COMPLETELY.
OKAY.
WELL, YOU'RE OBVIOUSLY MORE MATURE THAN ME, 'CAUSE I REALLY MISS HAVING A DAUGHT--
LOOK, I'M NOT SURE I CAN EVER *TRUST* OR *LOVE* YOU AGAIN...
BUT I'M WILLING TO *LISTEN* TO YOUR EXPLANATION OF HOW YOU CAME TO BE THIS WAY.
IN FACT, I'M GONNA KEEP COMING BACK HERE UNTIL *YOU'RE* WILLING TO...
WELL, SOMEDAY, WHEN YOU'RE READY TO HEAR IT, AND I'M READY TO SHARE...IT'S ALL OVER THERE...


YOU KEEP YOUR DIARY ON COMPUTER?
I ONLY ASK THAT YOU NOT READ IT UNTIL I'M FINISHED.
FAIR ENOUGH.
I'VE TRIED TO FORGET ABOUT MY PAST, SARA, BUT IT KEEPS RESURFACING. A KID CAME BY LOOKING FOR HIS MOM. I BELIEVE YOU KNOW HER. JULIE WIN--
GET OUT.
IT'S TRUE.
WOW. JULIE'S SON. I NEVER FOUND OUT WHAT HAPPENED TO HER...OR DAVE.
WELL, I KNEW SHE HAD A SON, BUT THAT'S ALL. I SENT HIM TO DAVE. MAYBE HE CAN FIND JULIE FOR 'EM.
UH... YEAH.
WELL, MAYBE YOU CAN BLOW HIM OFF, BUT I MEANT WHAT I SAID, YA KNOW, ABOUT COMING BACK HERE JUST TO GIVE YOU CRAP--A LITTLE PART OF YOUR PAST YOU CAN'T GET RID OF...
...JUST TO TORTURE YOU, 'KAY?
'KAY.

THIS GUY REALLY NEEDED A HUG.

HE ALREADY LOOKS... MORE RELAXED.

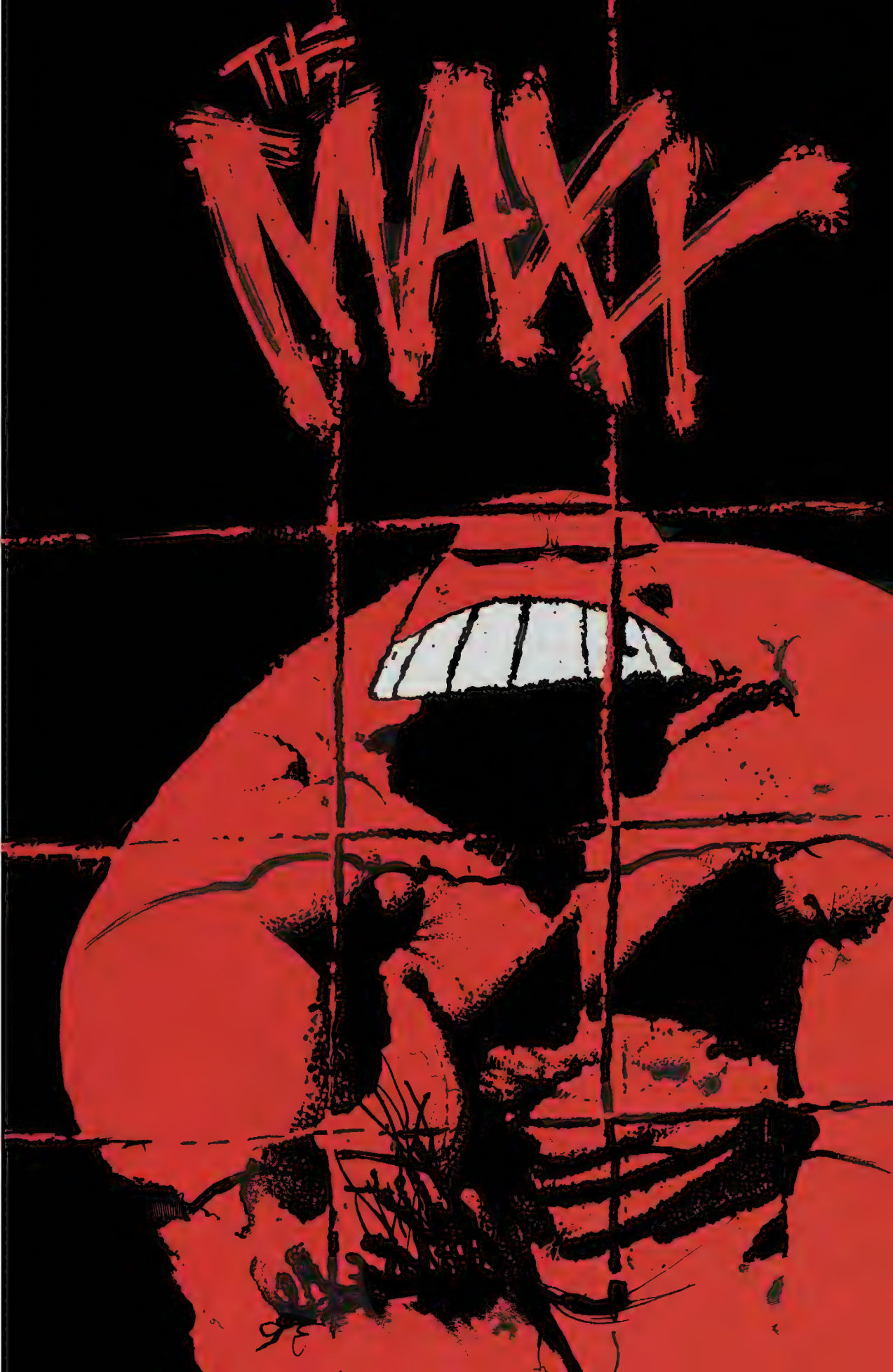
THAT LITTLE GIRL SUNK IAGO'S PIER. SHAME ON HER! NOW IAGO WILL HAVE TO FEED THE FAIRIES FROM A NEW ONE.

THREE MORE PEOPLE NEED HUGS AND ATTENTION, AND ONE THING'S FOR SURE...

...THE FAIRIES WON'T GO HUNGRY TONIGHT.

Sam Kieth

THE
WAX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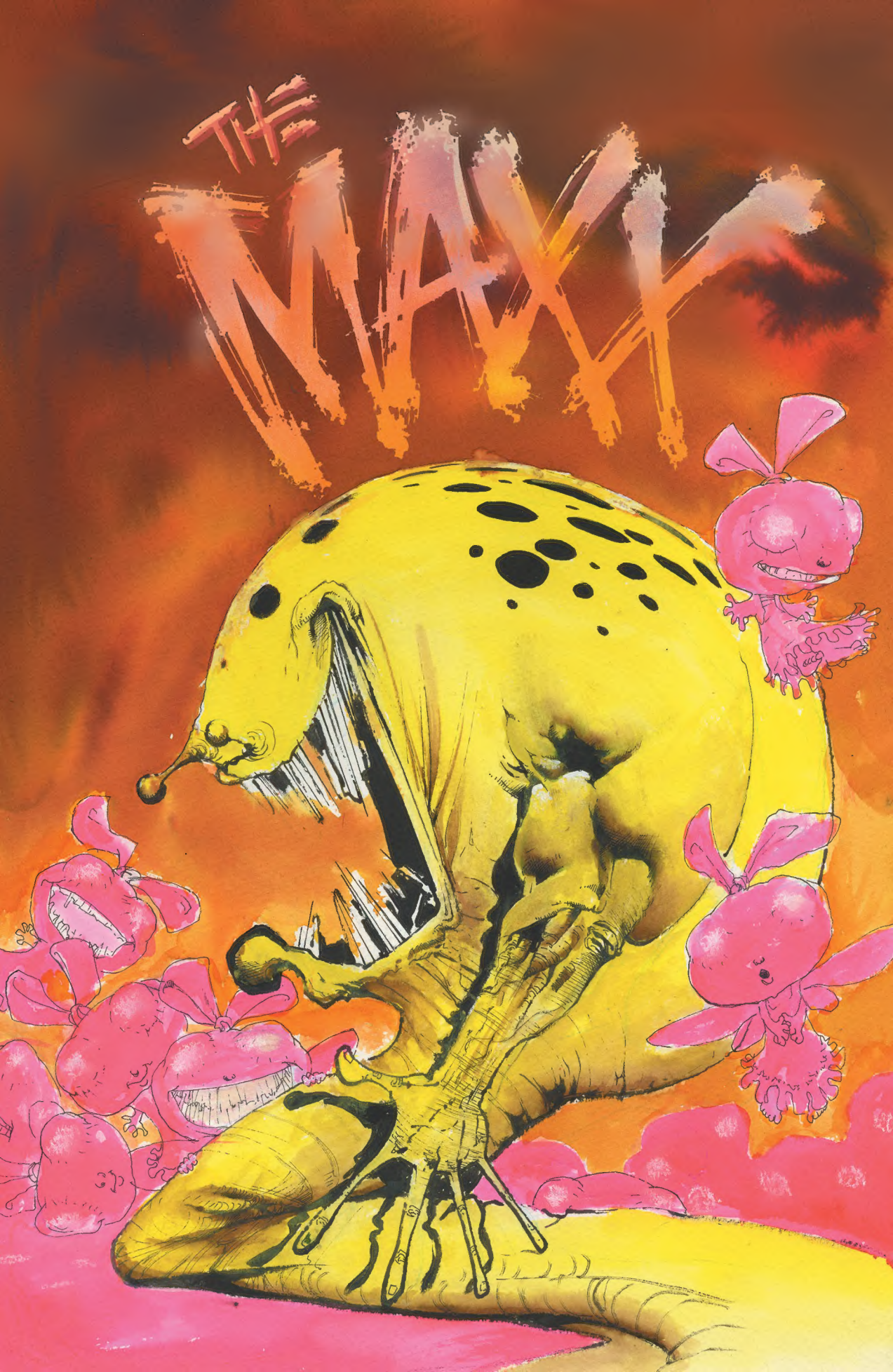
THE
MAXX

The classic comic by Sam Kieth and William Messner-Loebs is back in this remastered edition that collects issues #19–24 of *The Maxx* with all-new colors by Ronda Pattison, as well as the issue scripted by Alan Moore.

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